Sounders of Three

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Sounders of Three

by inameitlater

Summary

"The Chesapeake Ripper kills in sounders of three."

In which Will continues his journey after the events of "We Killed a Dragon Last Night".

Notes

End OTW Racism: A Call To Action: https://end-otw-racism.tumblr.com/

Blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc. Have fun, let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

I'm very grateful for my wonderful beta readers: emptyheart, NiaKantorka, obermietze, Gwilbers, Cathy_Kitty_Pretty.
Thank you so much for all your help! All remaining errors are mine.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Translation into Русский available: Тройная партия by Vi_Ehwaz
- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: Sounders of Three by spacemonkey42
- Translation into 日本語 available: Sounders of Three by maw_mow_r

Chapter 1

It was a blur. Hannibal blocked his arm and grabbed him, but Will hit him with his foot and they fell together with the glass between them. It cut into Will's thigh and he grunted and rolled away from Hannibal. Warmth spread with the blood from the wound and Will felt a familiar sluggishness. He laughed and tried to hold the wound but his arms didn't follow his commands. Hannibal's silhouette came up above him and Will felt pressure on the thigh.

"Keep still," Hannibal ordered with a rough voice but he didn't sound confident. Will wished the light was on so he could see Hannibal's face. The warmth was still spreading around his leg, but his hands and arms were cold.

It always ended like this between them, with blood rushing out of his veins and burning on his skin. Will closed his eyes and from far away he heard Hannibal call his name.

"Will! Will!?"

~ONE~

"Will?" he heard Hannibal say again. "Will?"

Dying had felt peaceful this time. Hannibal had been with him, and there hadn't been a great amount of pain. But he was in pain now. The pain of fever, like his head would crack open any moment. He tried to open his eyes, but his body didn't react. While it wasn't a feeling he was used to, it did feel familiar.

"Will, you are having an episode. I want you to hand me your gun!" Hannibal said.

Will shook his head confused as a shudder ran through him.

"Will?"

Hannibal's voice sounded like he was far away. Will felt himself fall. He expected to hit cold ocean water, but it was a hard floor that he landed on. Will convulsed as he heard a loud shot. His hand hurt. He realized he was holding a gun only when he felt someone take it. He couldn't stop them, and he couldn't open his eyes; his whole body was straining against something he couldn't identify.

"He's had a seizure," a familiar sounding male voice said. It reminded him of blood in the night snow. "But that doesn't seem to bother you…?"

"It seems to have been a mild seizure," Hannibal said. Will wanted to look at him, but his body wouldn't react.

“Are you the man who claimed to be the Chesapeake Ripper?” Hannibal asked with honest curiosity in his voice. Suddenly, Will remembered this moment and he remembered who would speak next.

“Why do you say claimed?” Abel Gideon asked.

“Because you’re not. You know you’re not, and you don’t know much more about who you are beyond that.”

Because Hannibal is the Ripper, Will thought confused. He had done this before but last time he had been standing, not lying on the ground. He had remembered it later in the BSHCI after the encephalitis had been treated.

“A terrible thing to have your identity taken from you,” Hannibal continued. Will wanted to scream, but his body wouldn’t let him. He could be dead for all he was able to move right now, though the pain in his head meant he was alive and hurting.

“I’m taking it back one piece at a time. You should see the pieces I got out of my psychiatrist.”

Frederick, Will remembered. Burned and partially consumed by the dragon. *No*, Will thought, *that hadn’t happened yet*.

No, that was wrong. He hadn’t met Frederick yet, or had he? He had travelled through time and no one else remembered. He had seduced Hannibal and had died; bled out in his house after fighting with Hannibal.

“Alana Bloom was one of your psychiatrists, too. Is that right?” Hannibal asked.

“Yes. Dr. Bloom,” Gideon said slowly, thoughtfully.

But this had happened the first time. When Hannibal had been his psychiatrist and not his lover, when Will had been ill.

Encephalitis, Will remembered. He had a seizure because of the encephalitis. He had to be sick again, Hannibal’s patient again, and he had to be in his dining room together with Abel Gideon who had just escaped from the BSHCI.

“I can tell you where to find her,” Hannibal offered to Gideon, and Will felt tears escape his closed eyes. He knew how this would go and he didn’t want it to happen again. He didn’t want to be here. He wanted to… to go home. But where and when was home? It had been his house and his dogs and then his life with Molly. And after killing the Red Dragon and the fall from the cliffs and traveling back in time, it had been with the past’s Hannibal. But the Hannibal of the past had shot his dogs, and Will had died, again.

Will didn’t understand what was happening. Had he traveled a little in his personal future? Or was all he remembered a hallucination of his mind still suffering from encephalitis? Panic

overwhelmed him and he couldn't think, couldn't listen. His body wasn't reacting, and everything was wrong. He couldn't be here. He didn't want to be here.

Will was pulled out of his panic by hands touching him gently. His head and neck were lifted from the floor. Will knew these hands. Hannibal's hands had hurt him, comforted him, fucked him. They were familiar, and still he wanted to cringe away from the touch and the following embrace. Hannibal must have sat down and pulled him against his chest.

"Will, can you hear me?" Hannibal asked.

Will wasn't sure if he wanted to react. He knew what would follow after all. A quick check that Hannibal's toy wasn't damaged too much and then off to kill Abel under the disguise of protecting Alana.

"You must be confused," Hannibal said. "But it is important you pull yourself out of your current state, Will."

If he could, Will would have snorted or cried. He wasn't sure which. But his body was mostly still and uncontrolled, and he was glad for it as it gave him some protection from Hannibal.

"Your name is Will Graham. You are in my house in Baltimore, Maryland," Hannibal repeated his old mantra. Will wanted to move away from him and his manipulations. He felt his body partially react. Muscles contracted and relaxed.

"You came to my house with a fever. You were hallucinating. You thought Garret Jacob Hobbs was alive and in the room with us. You may have had a seizure," Hannibal explained, stroking Will's hair. It made Will yearn for more touch, but it also made him angry to hear the lies. He swallowed consciously and again his muscles moved as he tried to control his limbs.

"Very good, Will," Hannibal said satisfied. "Try to open your eyes, please."

Will didn't want to. He wanted to go inside himself and not deal with what was happening. He wasn't even sure this was real. Maybe nothing was real anymore and nothing mattered.

"Will, please," Hannibal said. He sounded worried, and that hurt too. Will thought he behaved like an abused dog, still wanting to please his owner as he fought to open his eyes. It was too bright until Hannibal's head moved, blocking the light and shading Will's face. He looked down at him at a weird angle.

You killed my dogs, Will thought and wanted to sob. In anguish, he curled away from Hannibal. He only registered his ability to move as Hannibal gripped him again, holding his waist.

"Let's stand up, Will," he said and pulled Will into a standing position. Will's legs felt wobbly, and while he hated the touch at that moment, Hannibal's arm around his waist was the reason he wasn't tumbling downwards again.

"Can you hear me, Will?"

Hesitantly, Will nodded.

“Repeat after me,” Hannibal said. “My name is Will Graham.”

Will realized he couldn’t get out of the situation and decided to play along until he felt well enough to leave.

“My…” Will swallowed. “My name is Will Graham.”

“Raise both of your arms,” Hannibal instructed.

Will did as instructed and raised his arms. Hannibal studied him from the side and Will let his arms fall.

“Will, although you may not feel like it, I need you to look at me and smile.”

Smile, Will thought, and a hysterical sounding laugh escaped him. Will had never felt less like smiling; he moved away from Hannibal and the arm that was holding him.

“Let me go,” Will said as Hannibal tried to hold him.

“I’m trying to help, Will.”

This time Will snorted, and to his surprise, Hannibal stepped back. He stumbled to the floor again. He hadn’t been this weak the last time, had he? Or maybe there hadn’t been a last time. Maybe all he remembered was an illusion born out of the encephalitis that was burning him up.

“I don’t know what’s real anymore,” Will said with a desperate voice and turned his face to the floor, hiding it with his hands. He wanted to ask Hannibal, but he didn’t trust him. He wanted *his* Hannibal, the one who had let Will pull him over a cliff to be with him. Another sob escaped Will.

“Let me help, Will,” Hannibal repeated his plea. Will let out a shaky breath, feeling the will to fight leave him. He was so tired and everything hurt.

“What do you want me to do?” he asked still looking at the floor.

“I need to see you smile to exclude the possibility of a stroke,” Hannibal answered.

Will took a few deep breaths and made himself look up at Hannibal, who was crouching down beside him. Never before in his life had it been this hard to smile. He was sure it looked more like a grimace. But Hannibal seemed satisfied. Well, his toy was still working. *He should be glad*, Will thought.

“It wasn’t a stroke,” Hannibal said. “But you may have had a seizure. Can you tell me the last thing you remember?”

You accidently killed me, Will thought but didn't say and looked away from Hannibal. The memory of bleeding out in his house was actually peaceful compared with how bad he felt right now.

"I don't know," he answered Hannibal. "I was in my house, I think?"

"You must have lost time again. You have a fever," Hannibal told him. "When you came to my house you were hallucinating. You thought Garret Jacob Hobbs was alive. You behaved like he was in the room with us."

Will didn't want to answer, didn't want to play into Hannibal's game. He was tired and in pain.

"Not Abel Gideon?" he asked exhausted and saw Hannibal blink. Will felt like he should react to it, but he just couldn't make himself.

"Did you see Abel Gideon?" Hannibal asked neutrally.

Will sighed. He was tired of all the machinations. Tired of playing Hannibal's game.

"I saw him."

"Do you remember where so we can tell Jack?"

Will shook his head which caused another wave of pain. He needed a hospital and meds against the encephalitis. He let his head drop down to the floor again.

"I'm worried about Alana, Will," Hannibal told him and laid a gentle hand on Will's shoulder. Lying on the floor Will couldn't move away from the touch. "They found Dr. Chilton; Abel Gideon mutilated him."

It was a very blunt manipulation, Will thought. But his brain was boiling in his skull, Hannibal didn't have to be subtle. Even knowing what was going on, Will found it difficult to follow. He really wanted a moment to think.

"Call Jack?" he suggested after a moment to Hannibal without looking up.

"Yes, I will let him know Alana is in danger. Please stay here; we shall take you to a hospital when I come back."

Will heard him get up and move away to the kitchen. A door opened and closed. Will stared at the floor. He didn't know what to do. He didn't know what had happened. But he didn't want to be here. He didn't want to be in pain and be manipulated by Hannibal again. He wanted his dogs back, and he wanted to be with Hannibal without being hurt over and over again.

Will sobbed silently as he thought about Buster and Winston. They shouldn't have been

involved. Hannibal should have left them out of their disagreement. But Hannibal had known it would hurt Will like he had been hurt when Will killed Bedelia. Will should have predicted Hannibal's reaction. He should have known how Hannibal would have reacted. After all, Hannibal had killed Abigail when Will betrayed him. Will rubbed his hands over his face, trying to ground himself.

Hannibal would come back soon, would check if Will had left to kill Abel Gideon. Maybe he should leave. Will looked around, his sight was still a bit blurry, and his thoughts were so slow. He stood up, wavering in his movements as he took hold of the table. He had had sex with Hannibal on this table. He had laid Randall Tier's body on it. Both memories felt real. Could he trust them?

His gun and his car keys were lying on the table. Will stared at them. He didn't know what to do, but the weapon meant power. He wiped the tears off his cheeks and reached for the gun. He checked if it was loaded and as he stared at it, he slowly realized that Hannibal probably hadn't really gone and called Jack. Most likely he was just waiting somewhere for Will to leave. He wondered what Hannibal would do if he didn't leave. And he wondered how it would feel to raise the gun at Hannibal and shoot. He wondered if it mattered. He had already died twice, or maybe he hadn't. Maybe this was all just another hallucination.

Slowly Will moved to the kitchen, Hannibal wasn't there. He stared at the back door and released the safety of his gun. He raised it at the door, thinking about his dead dogs. Will's hands were shaking and he didn't know if it was from the fever his body was succumbing to or his indecision about whether to shoot or not. The world was still hazy around him, his head was killing him, and he felt like he was burning up.

The door opened and took the decision out of Will's hands. Time felt like it was slowing down as the door moved open and Will saw Hannibal look up into the house as he stepped through. His eyes widened as he saw Will standing with the gun.

Will shot two times.

The first hit Hannibal's chest and the second went through his throat. He looked surprised.

Hannibal fell and hit the floor with a hard thud. Will stared. He expected to feel freedom, but instead he felt horror and his throat was tight. He could hardly breathe as the haze of fever was joined by the disorientation of panic.

"Hannibal," he said and stumbled forward, lowering his gun and kneeling down beside Hannibal. He was twitching and didn't look at Will. He just stared at the ceiling and blood squirted out of his throat and leaked out of his mouth. Will let go of his gun and pressed his hands on the wound on Hannibal's throat, but it didn't stop the blood.

"I'm sorry," Will said and sobbed. "I'm so sorry."

Hannibal didn't answer. As Will watched, he took another weak breath and then stilled.

~TWO~

Will fell. He hit the ground with his left side and heard bones break. Pain let him blank out. When he gained consciousness, he was shaking, and he was so cold. Lying on his back, he started crying from the pain. Will was very sure that at least his shoulder was broken. Sobbing, he stared at the sky and thought he heard dogs bark and whine. He tilted his head carefully and discovered he was by his old house. He had fallen from the roof, Will realized. He was hurt and in shock. He should get inside and call an ambulance. The task seemed impossible. He could only breathe under pain. But he had to get up if he wanted to live. The shock could kill him.

Slowly and painstakingly Will stood up. He took hold of the banister and moved to the door of his house. It was locked. He leaned his head against it in defeat.

“Help,” he cried weakly. The barks of his dogs answered him and Will looked up. His dogs were here. Something was wrong about the situation, but he had to look after his dogs. Sluggishly he moved to one of the windows beside the door and turned his back to the glass intending to break it with the elbow of his unbroken arm.

Memories assaulted him. He remembered breaking glass and Hannibal trying to hold his blood in him. Will’s breath sped up even more than before as he also remembered shooting Hannibal and watching him die.

“Nooo,” Will whimpered, hearing the dogs behind the window. Indecisive, Will leaned against the window and as his broken shoulder touched the glass, he was pulled from his panic by pain.

When he could breathe again, Will made himself break the window. Though the pain was excruciating, somehow, he made it inside with only some extra cuts on his hands as he climbed into the house. Surrounded by nervous dogs, with Buster and Winston alive, he made it to his phone and called 911. It was hard to explain what had happened, harder to follow the instructions of the operator to lie down with raised feet and to keep warm. But the woman insisted, and Will felt too bad to argue.

Everything was vague after. Breathing was difficult and he was hurting so much it was hard to concentrate. The dogs gathered around the bed and Buster and Larry jumped on the mattress. They tried to gain his attention but laid down when he didn’t react. Their closeness helped him stay warmer than with just the blanket he had pulled over himself.

He must have fallen asleep because suddenly someone was calling for him.

“Mr. Graham!?”

Will looked around confused and saw a woman in a uniform of a first responder at his window. The window was broken, and it took Will a moment to remember that he had broken it to get inside. The woman continued to speak, but Will couldn’t understand the meaning of

her words. He felt relieved. Someone was here and would help him.

There was a loud noise, and he twitched in surprise, causing another wave of pain. He groaned loudly and closed his eyes, trying and failing to control the pain. Hands touched his throat, and Will's breath stopped in fear. He tried to move away from the touch, which caused more pain. He felt like his heart wanted to race away. He couldn't breathe.

When he woke up the next time, he was in a hospital bed with the all too familiar sounds of medical machines surrounding him. It smelled like disinfectants and hospital. His head felt fuzzy from pain meds. Will's first instinct was to check his belly, but he realized his left side was immobilized. There was a cast around his shoulder and arm. He turned his head away from the hurt side and saw a remote with a help button lie beside his right hand on the bed. He wondered if he should press it, but decided against it. Too much effort. He seemed okay and not in immediate need of help. The pain meds made everything less real. He looked towards the window on the other side of the room. It was daytime, and the sky was cloudy.

Vaguely, Will remembered shooting Hannibal, and shied away from the memory. It was confusing. Had it happened? He also remembered dying in his house under Hannibal's hands. But it couldn't all be real, could it? He wasn't even sure *when* he was. There was no ring on his finger, did it mean he wasn't married to Molly? Will started to feel agitated. He heard his heart monitor speed up.

He followed his first instinct and moved his right hand to touch his belly under the blankets and the hospital gown. There was no scar and no wound. Even with the haze of narcotics calming him down, Will felt frantic. No scar meant he wasn't after the fall or even after Hannibal's flight to Europe. He started sobbing soundlessly, not caring about the pain his movements caused him.

The door opened, and Will looked over to it. His cheeks were wet and he was still crying. It was a nurse with an attentive expression on his face.

"Is everything alright?" he asked and stepped closer to the bed, checking the machines for Will's vitals. Will didn't answer. The man looked down at him. "Are you in pain?"

Will wanted him to leave and shook his head.

"Can you tell me your name?"

Inside, Will groaned. But he made himself answer as he wasn't in any condition to get out of the conversation.

"Will Graham."

"And do you know the date?"

Will laughed which caused more pain and made him flinch. The nurse looked worried.

“No,” Will said breathing slowly through the hurt. “I don’t know the date.”

“How about the month?” the man asked. Will closed his eyes and shook his head. He remembered sleepwalking on his roof. It had happened when he had encephalitis.

“I think it’s 2013,” Will said and asked: “Is my head okay?”

“Your vitals are stable,” the nurse answered. “And it’s normal to be a little confused after a fall. But I will get a doctor to check you over. Do you want some ice chips in the meantime?”

“Yes, please,” Will replied.

The man left and an older woman brought him some ice chips a minute later. Will took some in his mouth and felt relief at the liquid and the coldness. He thought about what to do and tried not to think about the memories of different timelines. He had to concentrate on getting well, and for that he needed the doctor to check out his head. If he had sleepwalked, he had encephalitis and being in the hospital was his chance to get it discovered. Without the encephalitis, Hannibal wouldn’t be able to manipulate him, and he should be able to avoid going to jail.

It took a while until a doctor came to Will and he had time to prepare himself. He didn’t have to lie much during the examination. His confusion was real, and he told the doctor about his symptoms of headaches, sleepwalking, and hallucinations. He was told the year was 2013. He couldn’t help being distressed at the news but managed to hide it. The doctor decided to do an MRI scan. Exhausted, Will fell asleep afterwards.

When he woke up, Alana and Hannibal were in the room. He blinked at them, wondering if they were real. Fear and yearning raised their heads in the back of his mind as he saw Hannibal watch him. Will quickly looked to Alana.

“Hey,” she said gently, with a wide calming smile. It was the smile she used to make people comfortable.

“Hey,” he replied.

“Heard you took a tumble,” she continued.

“I fell off my roof,” Will answered feeling and sounding unsure. “They want to do an MRI scan, I think?”

“Because I’m confused,” Will added as Alana opened her mouth. “Do you know if my dogs are okay?”

“I’m not sure,” Alana said with a frown. “I came here first. But I can find out. Give me a few minutes; I will go and make a call.”

Will nodded with some relief as she stood up. She pulled her cell phone out of her bag as she left. Silence descended on the room and Will tried to look everywhere but to Hannibal. He

didn't know how to deal with this Hannibal after dying under the hands of one and killing another. But being silent was worse because his fear and confusion and love just built up in him.

"Nothing to say?"

"What would you like me to say?" Hannibal asked. Will risked a short glance in his direction. He seemed calm, but Will registered slight confusion around his eyes. It reminded him that this Hannibal hadn't known him very long.

"I don't know," Will answered. "I'm… confused. I had those… dreams and they felt very real."

"And what were you dreaming about, Will?"

He sounded so gentle and supportive, it hurt. The Hannibal Will had courted in the past had been like this, and still he had killed Buster and Winston. And killed Will, if only by accident. Thinking about it made Will remember and it was painful. He felt betrayed, but not by this Hannibal. This Hannibal was only just beginning his betrayal, letting Will sink into illness. It was a familiar wound.

"About us," Will finally said. "About how we could have met without… therapy, as equals."

Out of the corner of his eyes, Will saw Hannibal sit up and lean forward in Will's direction.

"Was it a nice dream?" he asked Will as the door of the room opened and Alana came back inside.

"Yes, it was nice," Will answered him. "Until the end."

"Will?" Alana asked. She had stopped walking and was looking at him with a frown. "With whom are you speaking?"

Will froze at the question and looked back to the chair Hannibal had been sitting on. He was gone. Will's heart rate spiked in panic and his breath sped up. He tried to swallow, but his throat felt constricted.

"Wasn't…?" he said and gasped for air. "Wasn't Hannibal just here!?"

Alana walked quickly to his side and took hold of his hand.

"It's okay, Will," she said. "You had a head injury; it's normal to suffer some side effects when your brain gets hurt. You are getting an MRI scan soon and your doctor will figure it out."

Her words and her touch didn't help. He felt his head getting lighter as he got less and less oxygen. A nurse came hurriedly in the room and a doctor followed. Alana must have pressed

the emergency button or his vitals had alarmed them. They injected him with something and soon the panic receded, though Will felt dopey. He heard Alana speaking with the doctor but couldn't understand them clearly. Being drugged or not really being there seemed to have become an often-occurring event for him.

"Will?" Alana asked as he felt her take his hand again. He looked at her, squinting and wondering where his glasses were.

"Did you just see Hannibal in the room?"

"We talked," Will confirmed and frowned. "We always talk a lot."

Alana smiled. Something was wrong with the smile, but Will couldn't figure out what.

"Do you understand that your psychiatrist wasn't really here?" the doctor on the other side of the bed enquired. Will looked in his direction but got distracted by the window. Some birds were far away on the horizon.

"Isn't my psychiatrist," Will told them, preoccupied. "Thought about calling him boyfriend, but can you imagine the fit? He was fine with partner."

Nobody asked anything for a while and Will watched the birds. It was soothing and he felt some raw yearning for Wolf Trap and the wide open fields.

"Are my dogs okay?" he asked and slowly rolled his head to look at Alana. She was the only one in the room with him. His whole neck felt fluid, like it wouldn't hold his head if he tried to stand up.

"I know where they are," Alana told him, frowning. "I will see that I take them to my place later."

"Thank you," Will said smiling. "You are always so good with them."

"Will, I have some questions. Can you try to concentrate and answer?"

"I'm drugged," he told her.

"I know, Will." She didn't look in his eyes as she spoke and she was gripping the railing of his bed tightly.

"Why are you nervous?" he asked her.

"I need to ask some questions," she said, finally looking him in the eyes. "And I should wait because you are drugged, but your doctor and I are really worried. We want to find out what's going on in your head as quickly as possible."

Find out what's going on in my head, Will thought and remembered the bone saw in

Florence.

“Questions are okay, but please don’t saw me open,” Will answered Alana.

She looked shattered at his words.

“I won’t,” she promised and took his right hand in hers. She seemed to like to hold his hand today.

“You said you saw Hannibal in your room, Will,” she started and he nodded.

“Do you know he wasn’t real?”

Frowning, Will looked at her hands holding his.

“You didn’t see him,” he said reluctantly, “so he wasn’t there.”

“But you thought he was there?” she asked. “You believed he was real?”

Will swallowed and wished for some more ice chips. His mouth was dry.

“I thought he came with you. Can I have some water or ice chips?”

“In a moment, yes,” Alana said. “You also said Hannibal is your partner, do you remember?”

Will thought that he remembered a lot. But he wasn’t sure what he was supposed to remember right now.

“I won’t go in Chilton’s hospital,” he said, and Alana blinked.

“The Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane?”

“Yes,” Will confirmed with a frown. “Don’t send me back there, please.”

“Nobody will send you there, Will,” Alana placated. “You are not insane, but you hurt your head and might be sick. I’m trying to figure out what is happening so you can get well soon.”

“And go home to my dogs?” he asked, feeling needy.

“Absolutely,” she said. “You called Hannibal partner a few minutes ago, are you in a relationship with him?”

“I love him,” Will said and felt tears forming. “I don’t think he loves me, though. He keeps hurting me.”

He turned his head away from Alana. He wanted to hide his face. He didn’t want her to see. She had brought them together, but he also remembered her advising him against visiting an incarcerated Hannibal. There had been judgment on her face.

“Do you want to tell me about him hurting you?” Alana asked very gently and pressed his hand, which she was still holding. He felt a short moment of need to do so. Tell her about being gutted, sawn open, being stabbed and letting his brain boil, but the faint terror of Chilton’s hospital was looming over him, and so he didn’t and shook his head.

“And how did you become… intimate?” she asked.

We killed a dragon, Will thought. *And he held me when we fell.*

He couldn’t tell Alana about killing the Red Dragon. He turned back to her with wet eyes.

“Can I have some water now?”

“Just a few more questions,” she said. “Did you ever stay at his place? Can you tell me something about his bedroom for example? How does it look?”

She didn’t believe him, Will realized and pulled his hand from hers. She wouldn’t give him water and she didn’t believe him about Hannibal, as she hadn’t believed him when he said Hannibal was a killer.

“You don’t believe me?” he asked annoyed. “You can’t have him this time!”

She was watching him with attention and her face was as neutral as she could manage. Will still picked up the frustration and that she felt offended.

“He is uncut,” he said not caring about being crude. “He likes to bite. He has samurai armor in his bedroom and a stupid monk statue beside his fireplace.”

She stared at him with wide eyes.

“Can I have some water now?” he asked petulantly.

“I’ll get some for you,” she said and got up. But it wasn’t her that brought water, a nurse came instead.

Will slept, and was woken as it was time for the MRI scan. The window showed him that dawn was close. The sky had darkened.

After a short moment of peace, he remembered Alana. He felt dread at having told her that he was with Hannibal. Obviously, he wasn’t drugged anymore. He would have liked to call her and tell her it had been an illusion but his cellphone wasn’t here and he didn’t have her number memorized.

When the nurses came to take him for the scan, he asked after his visitor and if they could get in contact with her. They weren’t sure if they could help but promised to check. He didn’t believe they really would.

The MRI was loud, and when he came out he had a bigger headache than before. He asked for aspirin, which seemed to worry everyone. He only realized why when he was back alone in his room. He was on painkillers for his injuries and shouldn't feel something as banal as a headache. He tried not to panic over it. The scan was done and they would know soon. Still, it was making him twitchy to lie in bed and just wait for the news. Especially as the unresolved situation with Alana was also hanging over him. He didn't remember every detail, but he could remember enough to worry. He hoped she hadn't gone to Hannibal with what should be delusions for her.

Even with his worry, Will fell asleep again. The painkillers and the injury made sure of it. When he woke up again, Beverly Katz was sitting on the table in the corner of the room and was working on a laptop. Sunlight shone through the window and illuminated her hair. He couldn't place Beverly first and wondered how she was alive. And then he remembered he was in the past before she had died and wondered why she was here.

"Hey," he said, and she looked up.

"Hey, Graham," she greeted him and tried to smile reassuring. "Need me to call a nurse?"

Will thought about it. The pain was fine, but he was thirsty again.

"Could you give me some water?"

"Sure."

She stood up and came to the bed holding a glass of water and a straw out for him. He drank greedily and breathed out in relief when the glass was empty. It occurred to Will that Beverly's presence was weird.

"What are you doing here?"

She sighed and sat down on her chair on the table facing him.

"Try not to freak out," she told him, and he felt instantly nervous. "But Alana Bloom went missing after she left the hospital yesterday."

It didn't compute at first. Will stared at her with a frown. Then he remembered what he had told Alana and froze. His face must have given him away because Beverly asked: "Do you know something, Will?"

He exhaled abruptly as his thoughts raced. He had told Alana about being with Hannibal, but here and now he had never been with him. If she had gone to Hannibal and offended him, she might already be dead.

"Will?!" Beverly asked and her voice pulled him out of his thoughts.

“I don’t know,” he answered not having to pretend to be confused. “I’m not sure what’s real or not at the moment.”

“But you thought of something, didn’t you?”

Will looked at his sheets and didn’t know how to answer. He didn’t want to implicate Hannibal but what else could he say? And his doctor had been there when he had first made his implications.

“I think,” he started and took a deep breath. “I think, I told her I had sex with Hannibal.”

“Your psychiatrist?” Beverly asked. She didn’t sound scandalized, but he didn’t dare to look up to her.

“But I’m not sure if that really happened,” he hurried to add. “I had at least one hallucination before the MRI scan.”

“You don’t know if you told Alana or if you had sex with Lecter?”

Will frowned. He was reasonably sure he had told Alana about being with Hannibal. But he had also slept with Hannibal. He shook his head.

“My doctor was there when I spoke with Alana at the beginning,” he said while staring at his hands. “Can you maybe ask him? I just don’t know what’s real right now.”

“Do you know what your scan said?” Beverly asked and it made Will look up.

“No,” he answered. “I don’t know the results yet.”

He had expected her to leave for the doctor, but instead she said: “Okay, press your call button and let’s talk to the nurses to get your doctor here. Maybe I can find out what you told Alana and you can find out what’s happening with your head.”

It sounded reasonable, and Will pressed the button on the remote. As they waited, his eyes wandered to the infusion bags he was hooked up to. He couldn’t make out the lettering, but the color of the liquid looked familiar. He hoped it was the medicines for the encephalitis.

The nurse came and Beverly spoke with the man briefly, then watched as he checked Will’s vitals. They were told it might take a while before the doctor could come. Beverly went out with the nurse and Will could hear her talk sternly through the door.

Even with Beverly pressuring the staff it took a while until Will’s doctor arrived. He introduced himself as Dr. Hinner and was hesitant to talk in front of Beverly. It was a refreshing change, but Will told him just to go ahead. Unsurprisingly, Will had been diagnosed with autoimmune encephalitis. He didn’t listen during the explanation of the illness as he had heard it before. They had put him on steroids and some other stuff.

“Okay, sounds like Will should be fine in time,” Beverly summarized when the doctor was finished. “I have two questions: One, what did Will tell Dr. Bloom yesterday?”

Hinner looked irritatedly from Beverly to Will.

Will nodded to confirm he should tell her and the doctor looked back to her.

“He… um… said something that suggested Mr. Graham is in a sexual relationship with his psychiatrist.”

It had happened, Will thought. He had been reasonably sure but having independent confirmation was good.

“How did she react to it?” Beverly asked thoughtfully.

“She asked me to leave the room to speak with Mr. Graham in private. I agreed. Afterwards, we spoke again. She wasn’t sure if Mr. Graham really was in a relationship or had imagined it.”

“She questioned me,” Will added. He craved to control the situation but didn’t know which way he wanted it to go.

“About Lecter?”

He looked to Beverly and nodded.

“She wanted details about his bedroom.”

Beverly’s eyebrows rose while Hinner looked very uncomfortable about being in the room with them.

“Could you give them to her?” she asked.

“Yes,” Will said annoyed and without thinking it through. “But I’m not sure, okay? I don’t know if I really slept with him.”

“Your confusion should settle when the medication has had more time to work, ” his doctor interjected.

“What did Dr. Bloom believe?” Beverly continued to question the man. He smoothed his hair nervously.

“Well, she seemed unsettled and asked me to ensure Mr. Graham’s psychiatrist couldn’t visit him.”

Will felt like he got punched. If Alana had requested that, then she was suspicious of Hannibal. Maybe she had seen his bedroom at some point and recognized Will’s description. If she had gone to Hannibal, there was a chance she was dead. He didn’t know how to help

Hannibal with this. He didn't even know if he should or wanted to.

"Will?" Beverly called. Her and his doctor were staring at him. They must have called him before.

"Yes?"

"I asked if Alana said where she was going? Dr. Hinner doesn't know."

Will shook his head. He didn't know, he just suspected.

Silence descended on the room, until Beverly stood up and said: "I will call Jack and discuss this with him. Thanks for your help, Dr. Hinner."

The man nodded stiffly and excused himself. Beverly followed him out of the room and again Will could hear her talk outside. He wondered why she wouldn't talk here. Maybe there was suspicion on him too. He tried to remember if there was already evidence at his house that could have been found. But his memories of this time were not very good. He just wasn't sure. The whole situation was exhausting.

"Jack will go and speak with Hannibal," Beverly informed him when she came back in.

"About Alana," Will said half to himself. Beverly fixed him with her eyes.

"I told him about her suspicions too."

Will looked abruptly away from her and to the window. He felt guilty, like he was betraying Hannibal. Jack was after him, again. The last time Will had put Jack on Hannibal's trail, Hannibal had killed Will, by accident, but he had still died.

Beverly seemed to accept his silence and had gone back to her laptop, slowly reading something. Will would have liked to take his mind off the situation too. He wished he knew what he wanted. It was frustrating how slow his thought processes were. He tried to mentally sort out what had happened, but sleep claimed him again.

~THREE~

Will woke up retching over his kitchen sink staring at Abigail's ear and three aspirin. He cried out without words and stumbled backwards until he hit the counter with his backside.

"No, no, no, no, no," Will repeated with a hoarse throat. He slipped downwards and hid his face in his hands. He didn't think for a while, just sat there hiding from the world.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

After the events of "We Killed a Dragon Last Night", Will woke up seizing in Hannibal's dining room with Abel Gideon and Hannibal. Things happened and he found himself moving around in time.

Chapter Notes

Blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc. Have fun, let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

I'm very grateful for my wonderful beta readers: emptyheart, NiaKantorka, Gwilbers and Cathy_Kitty_Pretty.
Thank you so much for all your help! All remaining errors are mine.

Please check out the wonderful gif Sirenja <3 made for the fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Taste intruded first. It was impossible to ignore the sourness of vomit in Will's mouth. Not wanting to really be aware again, Will stood up and went to his bathroom. Mechanically he put toothpaste on his toothbrush and started to clean his teeth. Minutes passed by until nothing but the taste of mint was left in his mouth. But it seemed like he could still feel the soft and at the same time firm flesh of Abigail's ear pass over his tongue. Will spit out the toothpaste and rinsed.

Staring in the mirror he didn't recognize himself. After months of living in the past, in a time before he met Hannibal the first time, he should be used to a forehead without a scar from Hannibal's saw, but it still felt wrong. He touched the cheek the dragon had stabbed. He stroked down to his lips and repeated the stroking inside his mouth. Will took off his shirt and checked his shoulder; nothing hurt like it had after falling from his roof. He took off his shorts. His thigh, where Hannibal had stabbed him accidentally, was undamaged.

He looked down at his limp cock and his dirty and shaking legs and felt defeated and empty. Part of his mind told him it was the encephalitis, raging through him untreated again. He wanted to feel better and to understand what was happening. He went to the bathtub, shakily sat down in it, and turned on the taps. First, he just rubbed at his dirty feet, finding some relief from the heat of the water. Then he remembered Beverly finding Abigail's blood and got his nail brush to clean his nails. He scrubbed himself until his skin was clean and

reddened from the brush and his nails were completely white. Having cleaned his hands from the blood, he continued on his arms and legs and then the rest of his body. It felt cathartic to clean himself. He soaped and showered the foam off . When he dried himself, he remembered the Hannibal of the past moisturizing his skin after their bath. He had been so gentle with Will, but their time had still ended in death.

Naked, Will walked out of the bathroom and got dressed in fresh clothes. It felt as good as getting clean and he felt awake enough to let the dogs out. Standing on the porch, he wondered if Hannibal was watching. He must have been here just recently to feed him the ear. Had he driven home afterwards and awaited Will's call or was his landline forwarded to his cell phone? Did it even matter? His last… time jumps had been so quick. He probably wouldn't stay here for long. Or this was all a hallucination. If this was just a fever dream, it would explain the rapid changes during the last few days. Maybe it was due to the encephalitis. It would mean the future was a dream he had had. Or they had fallen and Will was in a coma, and his subconscious mind was making up a fairy tale for him.

Wendy came running in with Larry at her tail, and she hid behind Will's legs as the bigger dog tried to get her to play. Will smiled. *The dogs were okay*, he thought and looked around at his playing pack. They were okay and he had to look after them as long as he was here. Even if it was a dream, it felt too real to ignore. He called them back inside and fed them before he went to the kitchen sink.

Abigail's ear was still lying in his vomit. The aspirins had dissolved a little. He turned on the water and let it pour over the ear while he got a plastic bag and bleach. When the ear was deposited in the bag, he cleaned the sink as best as he could. It wasn't perfect forensically, but maybe he could avoid an investigation of his house. He started a fire in the fireplace of his living room and went upstairs to clean the bathtub from potential traces of Abigail's blood that he might have scrubbed off.

When he came downstairs with his dirty clothes from the last day, the fire was roaring, and he fed it the cloth piece by piece until nothing was left but ash. He was shaking again afterwards and took aspirin, but it didn't help. He didn't feel like eating and wondered for the first time if Hannibal had given him something to make him nauseous.

Will made himself drink some water and called his dog sitter, asking if they could take over for a few more days. They couldn't, which was a nuisance. Hopefully, Alana could help him with them. He needed to get rid of the evidence, distract Hannibal somehow and get treatment. Will had no clue how he could distract Hannibal; part of him expected him to show up any moment.

Concentrate, he told himself. He could deal with the evidence. Getting Hannibal off his back would have to wait until he had worked out what to do.

He didn't remember which lures were the ones Hannibal had planted, so Will took all newer ones and put them in another plastic bag. Getting the hot ashes out of the fireplace was more difficult. He used a big tin for them. Outside he poured a little cold water on them and placed

them on plastic in the car. He let the dogs roam outside while he checked the house again. Leaving the dogs felt really bad, even with full bowls. Knowing he wouldn't be back soon just made it worse.

He called Alana as he drove off his property in direction of Quantico, but she didn't pick up. He left a voicemail and asked if she had heard from Abigail. He quickly explained how he had taken Abigail to see her house and that she had run off.

"Call me back, please?" he asked before he ended the call. He turned off his phone and dropped it on the passenger seat before he continued on the road. He wondered if he should have called Jack or if he would lay it on too thickly with that move.

No Bentley or other car followed him as he drove and so he stopped at a river he knew and disposed of the ashes. He rinsed the tin until no ash was left in it and let it float off. He wanted to throw the lures and the ear in the stream too, but he knew it was better to spread the evidence. He put on gloves and used a sharp knife to cut Abigail's ear in little pieces before he threw the knife in the stream. A few miles after his stop at the river he started to throw the lures out of the window in the ditch every half mile or so. When he was done with it, he drove off the road again and buried the pieces of Abigail's ear in three little graves which were a bit apart.

His last act before getting back to his car was to burn the plastic bags and the gloves he had used with the help of some lighter fluid. It smelled horrible, but again, it was the best he could do at the moment and with the limited time he had. Back in the car he swallowed more aspirin, drove back to the road and drove some more miles. He stopped at a gas station and made a mess with the gas to overpower the smell of burning plastic on his clothes. After he had paid the unhappy employee at the cash register, he went back to his car and turned his phone back on. He had missed calls and voice messages from Hannibal, Alana, and Jack. Will swallowed nervously. He wasn't sure who would be the best to call. If he even should call any of them.

He didn't have a big and clever plan. He had gotten rid of the evidence as best as he could, and now he just wanted to go to a hospital. Springfield was only 20 minutes away and he felt so bad. The aspirin didn't help at all. The last time this day had happened he had been on his way to Quantico for processing around this time. The fever had spiked the next day, and he had escaped for his little trip with Hannibal. He should be fine for a while, but he didn't feel fine.

Will decided to leave the scheming to Hannibal and continued driving. Even when his phone rang again and he saw Jack's name on the screen he didn't react. Will was feeling like the Hannibal of his future was whispering in his ear, he stopped beside a parked cop car when he entered Springfield.

"Excuse me," Will said after lowering the side window. "Could you tell me where the next hospital is?"

The two men looked at him closely.

“You okay?” the one closest to Will asked.

“Yes,” Will answered nodding and stopped himself. “Or better, I’m not sure. I haven’t felt good for a few weeks, and my fever spiked recently. But I’m fine to drive.”

He mustn’t have looked good in their eyes because they decided to escort him to the closest hospital. Will didn’t have to pretend to feel sheepish when they left him after he parked his car close to the emergency entrance.

He walked into the emergency room and went to the reception. After sitting down in the waiting area, he filled out the form he had been handed and the wait began. His phone rang again, so he turned the sound off with an apologetic look to the other waiting patients. When he tried to put it away, he realized there were witnesses of him receiving the call. But he couldn’t very well make calls while waiting, could he? Instead, he sent a quick email to Human Resources at Quantico to let them know he was taking a sick day and then a message to Hannibal, Jack, and Alana: *Sorry, at a hospital in Springfield. Fever spiked and I lost time this morning. Getting checked out at an Emergency room. Will call later.*

Afterwards, Will very visibly put his phone away. If nobody saw him look at it, he could claim he hadn’t seen any messages. At some point in the waiting room, Will felt himself slipping from the chair. He tried to stop the movement and reach for a hold, but his body didn’t react. His head hit the floor and everything went black.

When Will woke up, he was chained to a hospital bed. He panicked. Thinking he was in the BSHCI, he fought against the restraints.

“Will!” he heard Hannibal call him. Will threw his head in the direction of the voice and stilled his movements. Hannibal was sitting at his bedside, dressed in a suit and they weren’t in a room in the BSHCI but in a cheery hospital room. There were landscape pictures on the wall.

“It’s alright,” Hannibal said and took hold of Will’s hand.

“Are you real?” Will asked looking at the hand around his and then at the restraints. “Get these off me!”

“Of course,” Hannibal hurried to say and stood up. He opened the restraint on the first hand. When it was free, Will reached over to the other side to open the restraint there. Hannibal went to the bottom of the bed and worked on the bindings on Will’s feet. Will rubbed his free wrists and stared at Hannibal’s back. He wanted to hug him.

“What happened?” he asked instead, and he didn’t have to pretend to sound desperate and confused.

Having freed Will's feet Hannibal stepped back. He sat down in the chair beside Will's bed again as Will sat up.

"You had a seizure in the waiting room of this hospital," Hannibal explained. "The restraints were to protect you from hurting yourself with involuntary movements. Do you remember how you got to the hospital?"

"Vaguely," Will sad frowning. "I had a fever again and I think I lost time? I wanted to drive to Quantico, but I felt so bad that I went to the hospital instead?"

Hannibal gave him a single nod.

"It was good you did so," he told Will looking solemnly. "The hospital took another MRI scan, and it was discovered that you are suffering from encephalitis."

"Encephalitis?" Will asked without much emotion. He reminded himself that it was all a game for Hannibal.

"Autoimmune encephalitis to be precise," Hannibal confirmed and tilted his head as if ashamed. "And I must apologize, Will. Autoimmune encephalitis can cause many of the symptoms you have suffered in the last few weeks."

"But your friend Dr. Sutcliffe gave me an MRI scan too and he didn't find anything, did he?"

Will felt stupid playing Hannibal's game but even knowing Hannibal was pretending he couldn't stop himself from wanting to reassure him. Hannibal shook his head.

"On another matter, you should know that Abigail is missing, Will."

Will had to think about the context of this statement first and was unsure how to answer.

"I took her to Minnesota," he said slowly. "She ran away when we were in her father's cabin. She didn't come back with me."

"Do you remember, what happened in the cabin? Was she afraid?"

Will felt irritation at the question as he knew Hannibal tried to lead him to certain conclusions. But two could play this game.

"She confessed to being her father's helper," he said looking at the sheets as if deep in thoughts and memories.

"Hannibal," he said and looked up into his eyes, "she told me you knew. She told me you had said I would understand and protect her."

It was impressive to see Hannibal not react at Will's accusation. If Will didn't know what was going on, he would never have suspected him.

But then Hannibal hung his head as if in shame before he answered with a question: “Don’t you understand her, Will? And wouldn’t you protect her?”

Don’t you understand me? Would you protect me? Will heard and couldn’t help but feel fond even knowing it was a manipulation. Without thinking about it, he reached out and put his hand in Hannibal’s hair. He froze under Will’s fingers and Will petted the silky strands with a willful smile. Memories of the weeks he had spent as Hannibal’s lover rose, and he couldn’t continue with the pretense. Hannibal looked up without dislocating Will’s hand from his hair.

“I had this dream,” Will said with a painful smile. “We were on a cliff together with a dragon and it was beautiful.”

“A dragon?” Hannibal asked, neutral, and the little hope Will had crumbled. He pulled his hand away from Hannibal’s hair.

“It was just a dream,” Will deflected with disappointment in his voice and looked away from him. This wasn’t his Hannibal. But maybe he could answer his unspoken questions from before anyway.

“We have to call Jack and tell him Abigail confessed to being her father’s accomplice,” he said, making himself look back to Hannibal. “I won’t tell him you knew about it.”

Hannibal nodded.

“Jack said he would come over here to speak with you,” he informed Will.

“Soon?”

Hannibal checked his watch.

“He should be here within the hour.”

“Should we call the nurse to check me?” Will asked Hannibal and it made the man move. Compared to his last hospital stay in the other… timeline when he fell off his roof, everything went much quicker with Hannibal there to speed the hospital wheels up. A nurse checked Will over and his doctor, a woman this time, was there within 10 minutes. Will took hold of Hannibal’s hand as the man pretended to get ready to leave. Hannibal stayed as Will’s doctor explained the encephalitis, the treatment they had him on and when they took off most of the sensors. Will pretended to listen but was really just focused on Hannibal’s hand. He had never taken liberties like this and the hair petting in the original timeline and he was wondering why Hannibal allowed it.

A little later it was just them in the room. Hannibal looked interested at Will’s hand in his own.

“In your dream,” he started, “what was our relationship, Will?”

Will smiled lightly at the question. He wondered if his changed behavior was interesting

enough for Hannibal to not push his original agenda. Will would prefer it. It was easier to avoid the BSHCI when Hannibal wasn't working against him. Who knew what other tempered evidence he had prepared.

"Do you remember when you asked me if you were my psychiatrist, or if we were simply having conversations?" Will asked and Hannibal gave a nod of recognition. "I think I just want us to have conversations. Even if it means you can go and tell Jack all my secrets."

Hannibal seemed intrigued and Will felt like he could hear his mind working, trying to figure out how to use Will's confession.

What are you feeling for me at this moment? Will wondered and asked: "Do you want that too?"

He felt so vulnerable asking and couldn't help but look away from Hannibal again. Involuntarily, he tried to pull his hand away as well, but Hannibal tightened his grip.

"I very much enjoy our conversations," Hannibal said. When Will glanced in his direction Hannibal was smiling. "If given the choice I would prefer our talks to being your psychiatrist."

Will answered him with a weak smile. "But?"

"But I do worry that your current feelings are caused by your illness," Hannibal replied. "You have never hinted at wanting to be… friends."

"You are my friend," Will said firm. Hannibal's definition of friendship was skewed compared to "normal" people, but he was Will's friend. "I have seen you as my friend for a while now."

He saw Hannibal's mouth open to reply, but at the same time Will heard the room door open. Hannibal took his hand off Will's and stood up.

"Jack," he greeted the other man and Will turned. There weren't any agents with Jack and it eased Will's worries. Hopefully, he wasn't here to arrest Will.

"Hannibal," Jack replied.

"Hey Jack," Will hurried to say.

"Will, how are you?"

Will grimaced.

"Well, according to my doctor my brain was boiling, for a while anyway. But now that they found it I will be okay soon?"

He looked to Hannibal as if he wanted confirmation. The doctor nodded.

“Will was diagnosed with autoimmune encephalitis. He is on steroids and hopefully, the treatment will cure him fully.”

“Good, good,” Jack commented and pulled a chair to Will’s bedside to sit down. “We were worried.”

Will wondered who “we” was but didn’t ask. He thought Jack would want to interrogate him about Abigail first.

“I need to talk to you about Abigail Hobbs,” he said solemnly.

“That’s fortunate as Will has discovered something crucial when he was in Minnesota with Abigail,” Hannibal interjected. Will felt weirdly good, knowing they were playing on the same side if only during this conversation.

“Abigail confessed to being her father’s accomplice,” Will said and tried to look devastated. Jack leaned forward at Will’s words. Will knew it was confirmation of Jack’s suspicions and it must be well received at this point.

“Did she now?” he said more to himself than to Will and Hannibal. “That fits with some evidence we found. Can you tell me what exactly happened? Why did you take her to Minnesota?”

“I thought she could help me find out what I was missing,” Will tried to explain. He hadn’t actually thought about how to explain his behavior without sounding suspicious. But maybe he didn’t need to. He was ill after all. “I thought someone close to her dad had helped him and that it was the copycat and she might help me find them.”

“We have found evidence which confirms Abigail was with her father when he abducted the girls,” Jack told them. Will swallowed and as if on cue Hannibal filled a glass with water and held it up so Will could drink. He didn’t really need help but it might not hurt to let Jack think so.

“She attended orientation courses in the colleges where the abductions happened. It’s likely she chose the victims and helped her father abduct them.”

“Captor bonding might be a possible explanation,” Hannibal stated. He sounded vulnerable, and as Will looked to him he was impressed by the performance. He seemed ruffled by the news. Will wondered if Hannibal would be worried about Will recognizing how much of his emotions were only pretend after this. After all, Will now knew that Hannibal was aware of Abigail’s involvement.

“Maybe,” Jack said, but he sounded skeptical. “But Will was speculating the copycat was Hobbs’ accomplice and I’m inclined to agree with him. We are checking her alibis for the copycat murders.”

Will had no idea if Abigail had alibis for Hannibal's murders as the copycat. He didn't want to implicate her at all in those.

"I don't think Abigail is the copycat, Jack."

"You didn't think she was helping her father, either," Jack replied and Will grimaced. "Now tell me, what happened in Minnesota?"

Will kept this little unofficial statement short. He had flown to Minnesota; they went to the cabin, Abigail confessed to being her father's accomplice, she ran off, and Will came back to Virginia. He shamefacedly admitted to having some time gaps. Hannibal spoke up and explained those were most likely brought on by the encephalitis and helped him drink some water for the second time.

"Well, we are checking all known places in Minnesota at the moment. The cabin, the house, friends' houses. We will find her," Jack stated with confidence.

They haven't found the crime scene in the Hobbs' house, Will thought and didn't react. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Hannibal muster him.

"I believe Will needs some rest, Jack."

Will gave Hannibal a grateful look. His hand itched to hold Hannibal's again and weirdly, he felt like he didn't deserve the comfort Hannibal promised. He had recently shot the man after all. He pushed the thought aside, just thinking about the recent time jumps, or whatever had happened, made him dizzy.

"Ah yes," Jack said and straightened in his chair. "If you think of anything that could help us catch her, let us know."

He pinned Will with a sharp gaze, rightfully suspecting Will wouldn't want to help them. But Will nodded. Jack wouldn't find her after all.

Jack said his goodbyes. For a moment, it seemed like he expected Hannibal to join him, but he stayed right beside Will's bed and Jack left on his own. They remained silent for a long time, Will pretended not to feel the scrutiny with which Hannibal was watching him. What would he have done at this moment in the past without knowing what he knew now? He couldn't imagine it; all his feelings were a mess and his mind was too. He wasn't sure what came from the encephalitis and what came from the time jumps.

"Is my phone somewhere here?" he asked as he remembered his dogs. Hannibal sat up and checked the bedside table. The phone had been left there and Will took it from Hannibal's hand.

"I need to see if Alana can check on my dogs today," Will explained. "I'm not sure how I left them this morning. I lost some time."

"I could go and look after them," Hannibal offered and Will nearly flinched. He really didn't

want Hannibal in his house right now. Not with his hasty cleaning away of the evidence Hannibal had left.

“I’ll check with Alana first,” Will said. “I would prefer if you stay. If you can, I mean. Do you have patient appointments?”

“I have cancelled them.”

Will felt himself flush and murmured: “Thank you.”

Not looking at Hannibal, he turned on his phone and scrolled through what felt like a hundred missed calls and messages. He checked Alana’s text messages quickly before calling her. With Hannibal watching he felt weirdly exposed. She answered the call after the second ring and they had an uncomfortable conversation, at least for him. Alana seemed stressed from worry but happy he was okay. He asked her to check the dogs and stumbled over the logistics of her not having a key. They decided Alana would come to the hospital to get his.

After the call, he couldn’t look at Hannibal. He didn’t know what he was thinking. He wanted to crawl into his head but didn’t feel up to it.

I want a break, Will thought and sighed. Hannibal placed his hand over his, and it made Will focus on him again.

“I’m tired,” he said smiling sheepishly. How he felt so comfortable with someone who had hurt and killed him, he didn’t know. But Hannibal’s presence made him relax. If only because Will knew, Hannibal couldn’t scheme against him while holding his hand.

“Sleep then,” Hannibal said. “I will watch over you.”

Will nodded and refrained from asking him not to leave. But Hannibal held his hand as Will closed his eyes and waited for sleep to claim him.

Someone entered the room with loud steps and Will woke from the sound. Adrenalin kicked in and he wanted to jump up, but then saw it was a nurse. Glancing to the other side Will found Alana sitting beside him and blanched.

“Alana,” he muttered with raising fear. “Where is Hannibal?”

“Looking after your dogs,” Alana answered with a soft smile.

God no, Will thought. Hannibal must have used Will falling asleep to speak with Alana and switch their arrangement.

“Oh,” he said hoping he didn’t sound as scared as he felt. When Hannibal surveyed his house, he could come to the conclusion that Will knew what he had done. By the smell of the bleach alone.

“We were really worried,” Alana told him. Will nodded hastily. She had mentioned it on the phone already.

“The doctor seemed confident I would be fine,” he said while he inwardly tried to think of excuses for the questions Hannibal would have.

“It’s good they finally found out what’s wrong,” Alana said. “I just wish we had seen it earlier. I believe Hannibal feels guilty about not seeing it before.”

She was being very sincere. Distracted as Will was, he felt slightly annoyed by it. The situation wasn’t Alana’s fault, but nevertheless he didn’t want her here at the moment. It also reminded him of the hospital stay after his fall from his house in the last timeline.

“You don’t have to keep watch at my bedside, Alana.”

He saw her frown at his abrasiveness and hurried to say: “Sorry, I’m a little…”

Fucked up because I keep waking up in different times and don’t know why. Also, Hannibal might come back to murder me if he finds out I know what he did.

“Hannibal thought it would be good if you had company,” Alana said and smiled comfortingly. Will made himself take a deep breath. Of course Hannibal had brought him into this situation. “He will come back after he has checked the dogs.”

And Alana would babysit him until then. Will wondered if he should make her leave and plan a quick exit to avoid Hannibal. He wondered if he should incriminate Hannibal again. With Alana sitting here, he was very much reminded of her last hospital visit and her disappearance afterwards. He wondered if Alana had died in the previous timeline. If Hannibal had killed her when she went to him with accusations.

“Could I have some water?” he asked and she filled him a glass from the pitcher on the bedside table. Holding the glass, he drank, while his mind still circled around not knowing what Hannibal would do and what had happened before with Hannibal and Alana.

When he gave Alana the empty glass, he realized he needed to pee.

“I need to use the bathroom,” he confessed.

“Do you want me to help?” she asked and Will laughed briefly and shook his head.

“I would prefer a nurse.”

“Okay, let me get one,” she said and left the room, leaving her bag behind. Will remembered Beverly making him just use the call button because she didn’t want to leave him alone. Alana had wanted to leave. He should be careful about being uninviting. Just because he was afraid for his life didn’t mean he could risk raising suspicion. If Hannibal placed new evidence, he would need Alana as an ally. God, he wanted a break from all this so much and to figure out what was happening.

On the other hand, staying alive might not be important anymore. The last times he had died he just ended up in a different time and place within his own life. Will's thoughts stopped at the pattern he had just realized. Death had triggered his jumps. The fall from the cliff, him bleeding out in his house and Hannibal dying. Just the last time, he didn't know what happened the last time. But if he assumed he was jumping when he or Hannibal died, then it would mean one of them had died. Maybe he himself by a complication in the hospital or maybe Hannibal. Jack had gone to him to question him about Alana's disappearance. Maybe something had happened between them. Maybe Jack had found out and Hannibal had died.

Alana and a nurse came back. Will was helped out of bed by the man and accompanied to the bathroom outside on the floor with his IV infusions trailing beside him on the stand. He was allowed to use the bathroom on his own but not to lock the door. It made him unreasonably nervous. Hospitals were a place of vulnerability for him. But at least he didn't have a catheter this time.

Alana was sitting on the small couch on the opposite wall from the bed when Will came back in his room . Bringing distance between them, Will thought.

"Sorry for being harsh," Will apologized when they were alone again. "I feel crappy and was surprised Hannibal wasn't here; he said he would be."

She smiled warmly and Will tried to smile back.

"If you prefer to be alone, I can leave," she offered. "I don't want to add unnecessary stress to your situation."

Will didn't know if her staying would be good or bad for him and the situation with Hannibal, but he also knew Alana genuinely wanted to help him and couldn't just tell her to get out. She was his friend. Not in the same way the Alana in the past had been, but she also wasn't the Alana of the future, who had helped Mason and had been Hannibal's jailer.

"Did you bring Flannery O'Connor?"

Alana laughed and then stopped abruptly. Will saw pain on her face. He had an inkling it was about Abigail.

"What's wrong?"

They stared into each other's eyes for a moment until Alana sighed and looked away.

"Jack called me while you slept," she said, she spoke slowly, like she was searching for the right words. "The police in Minnesota checked the Hobbs' house and found something. It looks like someone lost a lot of blood in the kitchen."

Will couldn't blanch on demand but he tried to look surprised and wrung his hands.

“Do they know whose blood it is?”

Alana shook her head.

“Jack thinks maybe Abigail hurt someone?” she said and her missing protest told Will Jack had already informed her Abigail had been her father’s accomplice. He sighed and shook his head.

“I just hope she is alright,” he murmured.

“Me too,” Alana answered and Will felt like they were on the same page for a moment. A yawn caught him out of the blue.

“Do you want to sleep?” she asked leaning slightly in his direction and again Will was reminded of his last stay in the hospital.

“Wake me before you leave or when Hannibal comes back or if Jack calls with news?” he asked. He had enough of waking up in different circumstances as when he went to sleep. She nodded and Will closed his eyes. He was tired but felt uneasy. It had been fine to fall asleep with Hannibal stuck with him instead of conspiring. Now though, now he was nervous and it kept him from relaxing. His mind went back to the possible explanation of the jumps he had come up with. If his or Hannibal’s death made him jump, it would be a theory easily proven. But killing himself or Hannibal felt wrong. He wasn’t the same person who had pulled Hannibal off a cliff. And he might be wrong. He continued circling around the issue until he fell asleep.

He didn’t sleep well and woke up a few times, still fretting over Hannibal. He kept dreaming about him, but his mind was mixing the different versions. The Hannibal from the past, who had been his lover, kissed him as a greeting. Future Hannibal from the cliff was frowning at him as he leaned on the wall beside the couch, completely ignoring Alana. A few times Will opened his eyes and saw Alana sitting on the couch, reading or checking her phone. He closed his eyes quickly to avoid speaking to her. He continued dreaming about Hannibal coming back into the room, but it was a different Hannibal every time.

Will woke up abruptly as he felt someone step beside him. He recognized a nurse who was exchanging his IV bags.

“Hey,” Alana said from the couch and Will looked over to her. Outside the sky was darkening.

“How long was I asleep?” he asked with a rough voice. The nurse filled him another glass of water and handed it to him.

“Just a few hours,” Alana said as he drank. “Hannibal is on his way back. I think he drove home after checking Wolf Trap.”

She stopped speaking and watched the nurse. Once the woman had left, Alana leaned forward

and told Will in a conspiratorial voice: “I think he wants to bring you food.”

Will felt the corners of his mouth twitch, but he was too scared to really smile. He didn’t know what Hannibal had deduced from Will’s house and his effort to get rid of the evidence. Nobody else but Hannibal could see what Will had done. He would see it because he had planted what Will had destroyed. The question was, what would Hannibal do? Would he substitute the lures Will had thrown out and take Jack to the house? Not likely as he had told Alana he was on his way to the hospital.

“I could eat,” Will replied to Alana, “and Hannibal’s food should be better than the hospital food.”

Alana laughed: “Yes, it should be.”

She placed her book in her bag.

“Do you feel better?”

He looked from her to the IV bags and back.

“Not sure,” he confessed. “Am I supposed to feel better already? My head still hurts, but I don’t feel feverish anymore?”

“It will take a while, but it’s good you don’t have a fever anymore.”

Will nodded instead of replying.

“Is there any news from Jack?” Will asked and Alana shook her head. “Could you maybe call him?”

If they had rushed the tests, they might already suspect it was Abigail’s blood. But would they call Alana?

“I will give him a ring,” Alana decided and dialed Jack on her phone. Will watched her as she let it ring for a while. When she couldn't reach Jack, she hung up sighing. It felt familiar. Waiting was hard, especially with so many possibilities of what could happen next. Before Will or Alana could say anything, the door to the room opened and Hannibal stepped in, holding a basket in one hand and one of Will’s travel bags in the other.

Will watched him sharply, trying to gauge what he had found and decided, but of course Hannibal showed nothing but his polite psychiatrist front.

“Hey,” he said carefully and tried to smile.

“Hello Will,” Hannibal answered and smiled back at him. For him it was a very affectionate smile. Will hated it as Hannibal turned to greet Alana.

“Alana, thank you for looking out for Will.”

A polite exchange of information followed. Nobody had heard from Jack or Abigail. Alana informed Hannibal about the blood and he was sufficiently worried. They dogs were okay, Hannibal didn't mind looking after them again but had brought a second key for Alana so they could switch checking in. Will thanked both repeatedly for helping out.

The basket, presumably filled with food, was standing on the table without Hannibal inviting Alana to stay. It registered with Alana after the conversation slowed. First she looked a little irritated and then amused as Hannibal began to explain to Will what he had packed for him. She excused herself shortly after. They all promised to keep each other updated if they heard from Jack.

"That was a little rude of you," Will told Hannibal after Alana had left.

"Excuse me?"

"Not inviting Alana to stay," Will explained. "I think she wanted to stay, the whole situation with Abigail is hard for her. And we are her friends."

He watched as Hannibal pretended to realize his incorrect behavior and applauded the performance inwardly.

"You are correct," Hannibal said seemingly ashamed. "I had not thought of it. I must apologize the next time I speak with Alana."

"Mh-hm," Will hummed and looked to the basket. Even his fear of Hannibal's next actions couldn't make him forget that he was hungry. "Did you bring me food?"

Hannibal was pleased by his question and moved towards the table.

"Yes," he confirmed. "I thought something homemade would be more beneficial for your recovery than the hospital food."

The whole scene was heartbreakingly familiar and Will couldn't help himself, he relaxed a little as he watched Hannibal set the table. He started to get out of bed to join Hannibal.

"And I must make a confession," Hannibal continued to say as he placed the plates and cutlery on the table. "I hoped Alana would leave so we would have a chance to speak in private."

Here it comes, Will thought and took a shuddering breath. As he was trying to get a hold of the IV stand to roll it over with him, Hannibal turned. Will saw him look him over and suppressed the urge to make an insinuation. This was a different Hannibal, he couldn't behave like before, and he couldn't assume. Assuming had probably killed him in the past where Hannibal had been his lover. This Hannibal moved closer and helped Will to the table.

"What have you brought?" Will asked as he was seated.

“Unfortunately, I had no time to cook especially for you,” Hannibal explained.

Because you were sure I would be arrested by now, Will thought and placed the table cloth on his lap.

“But I had some leftover stew which I hope you will find pleasing.”

“So far, I haven’t eaten any food you cooked that didn’t taste good,” Will said and it was true. Because the soup in Florence hadn’t happened yet.

Hannibal smiled a little, proud at Will’s words as he filled the bowls. Will ate and stopped after a few bites. There was no meat in it. He didn’t comment on it and continued eating.

“That was delicious,” Will said after emptying his bowl. Hannibal was still eating, slower than Will in his usual savoring way. Will watched him with his food and pondered what was going on in Hannibal’s head. He must have found the empty fireplace and the missing lures. Not smelling the recent cleaning of the bathroom and the kitchen would have been impossible with his nose. And there had been other evidence the first time. Hannibal had handed over a recording of Will talking about Marissa Schurr. He was dependent on Hannibal not wanting him in prison, but unsure how to achieve it.

“Do you think,” he said as something occurred to him, “we should get Abigail a lawyer?”

Hannibal froze and looked up in what Will felt was genuine surprise.

“She will need one,” Will hurried to add. “And we are her guardians. What was it you said? ‘We are her fathers now.’”

“You are correct,” Hannibal said putting his spoon down. “I hadn’t thought of that. My focus was on hoping she will be well when she is found.”

“She will be well,” Will stated in a strong voice. He didn’t want Hannibal to doubt his belief. Didn’t want him to think Will knew about the ear. “She must be.”

“If we move to help Abigail, it might alienate Jack Crawford,” Hannibal noted. Will nearly smiled as he saw the opening Hannibal had just provided.

“I don’t care about Jack or the FBI,” he explained. “I care about Abigail and us; I want us to be alright.”

Hannibal smiled and Will felt the urge to pat his hand in comfort.

“And I should probably change jobs anyway,” he said instead and he saw Hannibal stop in his movements again and watch Will very carefully.

“Until now, whenever I suggested your position at the FBI wasn’t good for you, you rebuked me,” Hannibal pointed out. “What has changed?”

I'm an idiot who doesn't know when to stop his manipulations? Will chastised himself and stared out of the window at the darkening sky to avoid Hannibal's eyes. The logical assumption on Hannibal's side, from all the available evidence, was that he was hiding something from him. Hiding his muddy feet, an ear and lures made with human remains. But how would Hannibal deduce that Will knew about them? He washed off the mud on his feet without realizing it was blood and didn't throw up the ear, that was easily explained. But the missing lures and the fireplace? If Hannibal asked, Will wouldn't know how to answer. But talking about quitting his job must make him look like he wanted to run.

"Will?"

He twitched and turned to face Hannibal.

"Sorry, what did you ask?"

"Why you suddenly are thinking about not working for the FBI anymore."

Will sighed and rubbed his eyes. Partially to hide and partially because he felt tired again.

"I don't know," he confessed. "I just can't imagine supporting Jack when he is pursuing Abigail. And today," he shook his head, "today was so stressful. I have only vague recollections of how I ended up here, and it's scaring me. Abigail is out there, and I can't help her because I'm here. Because I didn't take care of myself."

"You feel guilty," Hannibal deduced and Will fought hard not to roll his eyes.

"I should be there for her," he whispered.

"You will be," Hannibal told him and reached out to place his hand over Will's. "When she is found."

"When she is found," Will repeated.

"I will look for a lawyer for her. It's a sensible suggestion."

Hannibal picked up his spoon and continued eating his remaining food. Will made himself watch the sky through the window instead of staring at Hannibal. It seemed he believed him so far. Hopefully, it would stay like that.

"Do you have patients tomorrow?" Will asked to interrupt the silence.

"Yes, but I can visit you in the evening."

"I would like that. And will you call me if you hear from Jack?"

"Of course."

A nurse came in to check on him as they had finished eating and she wasn't happy Hannibal had brought him food. Will made sure to speak to Hannibal to distract him from the woman. It made him feel weird after Hannibal left. He hadn't wanted the woman to become a target. In the timeline in which Hannibal had been his lover, he had thought about finding a compromise in regard to victims. Killing killers hadn't brought him any guilt, apart from killing Bedelia. If he had to distract Hannibal from impolite people, it would be a lifetime of work.

Trying to sleep in the darkened hospital room, Will found himself thinking about his lost future and the Hannibal from the cliff. His intuition told him the Hannibal of the future wouldn't have minded compromising. He looked out to the night sky, hoping to see the moon.

"I miss you," he whispered. "I will try to get back to you."

If his jumps continued, he just had to continue dying to get closer to the Hannibal who loved him and wanted him with all his faults. For a moment, Will considered killing himself right now, but then he remembered moving backwards in time after he killed Hannibal. He wanted to move forward but wasn't sure how to do it. A thought occurred to him and he took his phone. He opened the rarely used notes app on it. Squinting his eyes to look at the screen he typed down what he knew.

Spring 2019: Cliff, killing H.
Christmas 2012: wake up in past
Summer 2013: getting killed by H.
Winter 2013: A.G., Killing H.
Autumn 2013: Fall from roof, dying of complications?, H. getting killed?
Winter/Spring 2014: wake up after Minnesota with A.

He looked over the points and after a moment, he went over them again and added the pattern he saw.

Spring 2019: Cliff, killing H. + suicide (backward)
Christmas 2012: wake up in past
Summer 2013: getting killed by H. (forward)
Winter 2013: A.G., Killing H. (backward)
Autumn 2013: Fall from roof, dying of complications?, H. getting killed? (forward)
Winter/Spring 2014: wake up after Minnesota with A.

Will laughed with a slight hysterical undertone and let the phone drop. So, Hannibal was allowed to kill him, but he wasn't allowed to kill Hannibal. The universe hated him.

Chapter End Notes

Season 3 Episode 13 “The Wrath of the Lamb” BACKWARD to

Pre-Season 1 Episode 1 FOWARD to
Season 1 Episode 11 "Rôti" BACKWARD to
Season 1 Episode 6 "Coquilles" FORWARD to

Season 1 Episode 13 "Savoureux"

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

After the events of "We Killed a Dragon Last Night" Will found himself moving around in time. First it was confusing, but now he believes to have figured out the rules.

Chapter Notes

Blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc. Have fun, let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

I'm very grateful for my wonderful beta readers: emptyheart, NiaKantorka, Gwilbers and Cathy_Kitty_Pretty.
Thank you so much for all your help! All remaining errors are mine.

Please check out the wonderful gif Sirenja <3 made for the fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will had fallen asleep at some point, but he woke up repeatedly during the night. Sometimes from nightmares and sometimes because the night nurses came in to check on him. In the morning, he was awake long before anyone came into the room. The start of the day was stressful. He ate his not very tasty breakfast without enthusiasm. Shortly after, the rounds happened and his doctor and some of her colleagues checked on him. She told him to rest and let the medicine work. Not the easiest advice to follow. He didn't know what was going on in the investigation and with Hannibal. Every time someone opened the door to his room he expected it to be FBI agents to arrest him.

News came with a call from a distraught Alana. She pretended to be alright as she informed Will that the blood was Abigail's and that it was, in all likelihood, too much for Abigail to have survived the attack. Hearing the underlying pain in Alana's voice helped Will fake his own distress. He promised her that he was okay and was relieved when she told him she would call Hannibal next.

"She is okay," Will told himself after the call ended. "Abigail is okay."

But she was with Hannibal and most likely drugged and being influenced by him. Will didn't like it. He didn't have an alternative for her right now, but being under Hannibal's influence wasn't the best situation for her. Not knowing that Abigail was alive had given him the ability

to act against Hannibal the first time he had lived through this. Now it felt like not only his freedom was in Hannibal's hands, but also like Abigail was a hostage in their game. Even knowing so much more than he should, he felt like he was at a disadvantage. He desperately wanted to know which conclusions Hannibal had drawn.

The day dragged along. Will thought mostly about his theory of why the time jumps happened. He didn't really want to test it. Basically, because he neither wanted to die, nor did he want to kill Hannibal again. And he had no way of knowing where he would end up if his theory was correct. The last timeline with his fall from the roof and the broken shoulder hadn't been great. The situation right now was better, and the BSHCI was waiting for him in the future if he jumped again. Now, Abigail and Miriam were probably in Hannibal's house at the cliff. Hannibal might try to put him in jail or not, depending on how he accepted Will's manipulation.

He had asked Hannibal to be his friend instead of his psychiatrist. Would he go for it? Hannibal had accepted yesterday, but would it fit in his plan to change Will? It was difficult for Will to predict him. In the original timeline, Hannibal had framed Will to protect himself and to see what would happen with Will if he was pushed. But Hannibal hadn't moved against Will. The situation and Will’s behavior had to be a nice conundrum for Hannibal. Will had suggested being friends and he had hidden evidence. It might be interesting enough for Hannibal to delay his plans. But maybe Hannibal was just biding his time and placing new evidence in Will's home.

There were just too many options and Will was stuck in the hospital with a not optimally working brain. Figuring out what Hannibal was thinking was difficult under normal circumstances, but nearly impossible right now. It made Will antsy and slightly paranoid to think about all the possibilities. He took his IV stand and wandered the hallways of the hospital after an unappetizing lunch that made him nauseous. Walking didn't calm him down, but he was tired enough to take a nap afterwards.

Familiar hands stroking his forehead woke him. Will leaned into the touch and opened his eyes. Hannibal looked at him with a minuscule smile. Will smiled back before he remembered where and when he was. Slowly he made himself pull away from the touch.

"Hey," he said, pretending his behavior was normal.

"Hello, Will," Hannibal greeted him as he moved his hand away from Will's hair.

Not his lover, Will reminded himself.

"Alana called you about Abigail?" Will asked and Hannibal nodded solemnly. He seemed sad, but Will knew better.

"They didn't find a body," Will said sitting up in his bed.

"It is a small hope," Hannibal told him and Will sighed.

"I know," he said confessionally. It was hard to play this, knowing Abigail was alive. "But I can't… can't let her go."

"I too do not wish to give up hope for Abigail to return to us."

Will smiled tiredly at the performance. It made him feel a little impatient with Hannibal.

"Is something else worrying you, Will?"

He shrugged at the question.

"It's frustrating sitting around here," he answered. "I want to do something, but I know I have to stay here for treatment. I thought about calling Jack today."

"We are both too close to Abigail to be involved in this investigation."

"I know," Will said sighing again and looked around the room. On the table stood another basket.

"Did you bring me more food?" he asked Hannibal. "How did you smuggle it across the nurses station?"

He regretted saying it immediately after. Hannibal hadn't been too happy with the nurse yesterday.

"I bribed them," Hannibal said nonchalantly. Will sputtered in surprise.

"With what?"

"I regret to inform you that there will be no desert."

Will laughed and his amusement was reflected on Hannibal's face. His mind was whispering all the possible ways Hannibal could screw him over. Still, he felt very close to Hannibal at that moment. In his way, Hannibal cared for Abigail.

"I'm sure I will be very happy with whatever else you cooked," he said warmly and then watched Hannibal as he set up the table. Food and eating together were so important to Hannibal. It was a good sign that he still wanted to share this with Will. But the uncertainty of not knowing Hannibal's plans and suspicions, especially with regards to Abigail, were making Will very nervous. In the original timeline, Hannibal had kept her alive because he needed her to bring Will on his side. If Hannibal still wanted Will in jail, he could decide to kill Abigail and make Will look responsible.

Will stood up and dragged his IV stand with him to the table. He could only hope Hannibal wouldn't kill Abigail. He should also try to make himself more interesting to Hannibal. Maybe confessing about destroying some evidence would be a way to do it. Hannibal liked Will being dependent on him. Will couldn't decide this now, though. He didn't want to make another mistake because he hadn't thought everything through.

Will sat down and Hannibal served him a relatively simple meal of a kind of tomato risotto.

"Another vegetarian meal?" he couldn't help but ask.

"While not 100 percent scientifically proven, it's recommended to avoid red meats during the recovery from encephalitis."

"Oh." He hadn't known that. The last time he had spent his recovery in Chilton's hospital. He avoided Hannibal's watching eyes.

"What else should I look out for?" he asked without looking up and ate another spoonful of the risotto.

"With regards to your diet; caffeinated drinks, alcohol, red meats, sugar, and bread and pasta are to be avoided," Hannibal explained. "Berries, beans, lean meats, and fruits and vegetables, especially tomatoes, are favorable."

Will suddenly tasted the chicken soup Hannibal had made him once before: Lean chicken, tomatoes, wolfberries, peas and other vegetables had been in it.

Fucker, he thought with suppressed anger, but asked as pleasantly as he could: "More chicken soup with berries for me then?"

He made himself look up and greet Hannibal's smile with one of his own.

"It would be my pleasure," Hannibal said. "I also thought about making some traditional Creole food for you. Beans and seafood would be a good addition to your diet."

And of course, Hannibal wanted to cook him childhood food.

"That sounds nice."

"After you have left the hospital, you will need some time to recover."

In his original timeline, Will had been in the BSHCI after being treated. Nothing to do but sleep and scheme. He hadn't thought about what would happen after his current hospital stay.

"My doctor hasn't told me anything about the recovery yet."

Hannibal put his spoon down and leaned a little backwards in his chair. Will thought it looked like he was going into lecturing mode.

"Due to the inflammation and infection, there will be debris in your brain fluids."

So, Hannibal wouldn't want to eat his brain at the moment, Will thought.

"Your body will need weeks or even months to clear these unwanted substances. You will

need rest, and you will tire easily. Has your doctor discussed possible long term problems with you?"

Will shook his head in reply. He knew what could have happened. Remembering that Hannibal had knowingly taken the risk of permanently damaging him made him angry. It was difficult to keep a neutral face as Hannibal explained the possibility of mobility problems, altered control of his emotions, cognitive problems, communication problems, change of how he would feel sensations and the possibility of memory issues. He was talking about brain damage, and it was annoying to see Hannibal's commiseration face when Will knew it was fake. He made himself finish his food as Hannibal spoke. He sighed as Hannibal finished.

"Nothing I can do right now," Will said. "Thanks for explaining. I will speak with my doctor about the treatment plan for when I leave."

"I will, of course, help as much as I can," Hannibal told him.

"As my friend?" Will asked to avoid Hannibal maneuvering himself into a position as his doctor.

"As your friend," Hannibal confirmed with a smile and a short nod. He looked down to the remains of his food and hesitated. "We have not discussed your desire for us to become friends instead of having a doctor-patient relationship."

"But we never were," Will contradicted while Hannibal watched him. "We never signed a contract, and you never took money. For Jack's and my sake. Jack could get information from you, and I could pretend I wasn't seeing a psychiatrist."

"Then what do you wish to change?"

It was a good question. Frowning, Will thought about it. Hannibal, understanding that Will needed a moment, continued eating. Will yearned for the easy companionship of Hannibal as his lover in the past's timeline. He couldn't see this happening here. Nor could he feel the closeness of the original timeline and the cliff.

"You would miss our talks, wouldn't you?" Will asked. He knew Hannibal had missed him during the incarceration in the BSHCI.

"Yes," Hannibal answered. "I hope we can replace it with other meetings."

"I could take you fishing," Will offered only half-joking and felt Hannibal's eyes pin him.

"You had thought about taking Abigail fishing."

Of course, Hannibal needed to put a finger in the wound and remind Will of Abigail being missing and presumed dead. Will tried to look worried and sad as he was being reminded of her.

"Yes, I wanted to," he said turning away. This was frustrating. He didn't want to play games

with Hannibal. But knowing the Hannibal of this moment as he did, he saw no other option.

"I apologize," Hannibal said. "You would prefer not to talk about her."

Will shook his head. He wanted to talk about her, or even better with her. But the secrets were driving him mad. He wanted to trust Hannibal. Scheming was tiring.

"I don't want to lose her," Will finally said. "I keep hoping to hear from Jack."

"I too have hoped to hear good news. I took it on myself to call Jack today, but there have been no new developments."

Because you are holding all the cards, Will thought. But why was Hannibal content with the current situation? Will hadn't thought about it so far.

"And how are you doing?" he asked. "It must be stressful to look after my dogs, be there for your patients and visit me."

"Today Alana is looking after your four-legged family," Hannibal answered with a friendly smile. "Yesterday they were fine. You have trained them very well. And while I'm delighted you are worried about me, please don't. Your company more than makes up for some hours of missed sleep."

Will smiled back tiredly, and Hannibal picked up on it. He left soon after they finished their meal. Will was sad to see him go but also relieved. He didn't know how long he could keep this up. And he didn't know if he even wanted to. He was lying in his bed, trying to sleep, but couldn't help but ponder over his options.

Yesterday he had felt able to wait it out. But today, after only one day of waiting, he felt like a mouse in a trap, waiting for it to spring on him, yet unable to move away. He could stay in place, wait in the hospital until the encephalitis was healed. Maybe Hannibal would let him be. Being at Hannibal's mercy was never a good thing. Having leverage was better. He couldn't see any way to gain an advantage without getting Hannibal in trouble. The thought drifted through Will's tired mind. Did he need to protect this Hannibal? If his theory was correct, he jumped forward in time when someone killed him or he died and backwards if he killed Hannibal or possibly himself. If he just waited it out, he would still die at some point and jump forward.

He could frame Hannibal; he knew where Abigail and Miriam were after all. He didn't want to, though. He wanted to be with Hannibal. Their time together in the alternative past had been a lovely dream. But he didn't have the same advantages here as he had in the past and this Hannibal was out to have him committed. Will wasn't sure if he could manipulate the situation to his advantage at all.

Will took out his phone and looked at the list again. He wasn't even sure if the time jumps were real. He thought they were, but what if they weren't? To really know what was happening, and if his theory about jumping forward or backward according to who died how

was correct, he would have to die. But dying or killing Hannibal was not something he wanted to do. The memory of killing Hannibal in the in the kitchen was horrible. Killing him again was out of the question after that. He never wanted to see Hannibal dead again, even if this wasn't *his* Hannibal.

He had been ready to die on the cliff; he wasn't now. He also didn't want to be helpless again. Being here, waiting to be healthy and fretting about what Hannibal would do next was terrifying.

Should he act against Hannibal to protect himself? Or let Hannibal play out whatever he was planning? Will just didn't know. He had to make a decision because standing still was driving him mad and it wouldn't allow him to sleep for a long time. When he finally fell asleep it was nearly morning.

Will woke up after only a few hours of sleep when a nurse came to check his vitals. He checked his phone while he waited for breakfast; there were no news. He felt like Hannibal was watching him, waiting for his next move and he was unable to react at all. Breakfast was nearly unbearable and made him feel nauseous again. When the doctors made their rounds, he was snappy with them. His own doctor stayed and sat down as the others left.

"How did you sleep Mr. Graham?" was her first question and then they went through some very obvious screening questions Will wanted to deflect at first. But after the first few he realized he had a problem and complied with the questions and the following exam. He tweaked his answers a little. The whole truth of his mental status would most likely get him committed after all.

"Nausea and paranoia are symptoms of the encephalitis," his doctor said after considering his answers. "Your symptoms should decrease, but maybe you just need some more time. We will do another MRI and an EEG to see how far you are still affected. I will also up the dose of the steroids you are receiving. It's likely we just don't have you on the right dose yet. If it's not the dosage, we have other treatment options."

Will nodded. Steroids had been enough in the original timeline, but he didn't know which steroids or what dosage he had been on. Nobody had really discussed details of his treatment while they considered him a serial killer.

"I would also suggest you consider speaking with your psychiatrist," she said and Will swallowed with a scoff.

"I don't have a psychiatrist," he said.

"I thought Dr. Lecter…"

"He is my friend, not my doctor," Will said.

"In this case, would you like to speak with the in-house counselor?"

Will's first reaction was to decline, but instead, he said he would think about it to pacify the woman. The tests kept him busy during the day. Knowing his paranoia was at least partially caused by the encephalitis helped him think clearer.

He had a seizure in the afternoon and woke up feverish in an intensive care room to beeping monitors and machines. His doctor visited him shortly after he woke up and from her demeanor Will knew she was worried about him before she told him they had to start him on other meds. He didn't really listen to her until she asked for his medical proxy. He couldn't remember if he had one and her asking was a bad sign because she must be worried about him not being able to make his own decisions.

"I'm not sure when I last updated it," he answered honestly and after a while, someone from the legal department of the hospital came over to his room filled in all the necessary paperwork with him. When it came to choosing his medical proxy he wasn't sure if he should choose Hannibal or Alana first. But when he looked at the infusions and monitors around him, he put in Alana. Hannibal hadn't cared if he got permanent brain damage, Will wouldn't let him make further decisions about his health.

He slept through the remainder of the day and found Alana sitting beside his bed when he woke up in the evening. She looked as worried as his doctor had been.

"Hey," he said, his voice rough from sleep.

"Hey," she answered. "You gave me a fright when I arrived."

Will frowned and asked: "Why?"

"I didn't know you were in intensive care."

"Oh, right."

He had forgotten to let her know. Hannibal didn't know either.

"Sorry. I had a seizure in the afternoon and everything is a bit foggy afterwards."

She patted his hand and Will licked his lips.

"Any water?"

Alana nodded and helped him to sit up and drink some.

"I told Hannibal," Alana said as she took the empty cup. "He is looking after the dogs and will try to visit you tomorrow. The doctor I spoke with told me that if your condition improves you might be back in a regular room tomorrow. I heard you made me your medical proxy?"

Will blinked at the sudden change of topic and remembered the legal hassles.

"Is that okay?" he asked. He should probably have asked her before.

"Of course," she answered smiling. He could see fear in her eyes.

"My doctor seemed worried," he told her. "Hence her asking me for a medical proxy."

Alana pressed her lips together and nodded. Will sighed. It was frustrating that he wasn't getting better.

"Is there any news about Abigail?" he asked to change the topic again. "And how are you holding up?"

"Jack is frustrated about the lack of progress," she told him. "So far there are no new leads."

There wouldn't be, Will thought. He had gotten rid of all new leads. Jack must be desperate for some input at the moment. It must be really annoying for him that he couldn't put Will on the case.

"Beverly said she will visit you when she has a moment," Alana told him.

Another Beverly and another Alana, Will realized. How many did he know now? He made himself smile slightly. He didn't want to look ungrateful. Even when he didn't feel up to visitors right now. He wanted to be home again. He wasn't clear what home was, but he wanted it back.

"How are the dogs?" he asked and they spent the remaining time of Alana's visit discussing them.

During the night his fever spiked and they ended up putting him in a bathtub filled with ice cubes. He cursed all the Hannibals he had met in the different timelines under his breath while he was sitting in the freezing water and lost consciousness sometime during the treatment.

~ One ~

Will woke up without a fever. It was silent around him, it smelled damp and a little of urine. He was lying somewhat uncomfortably. He opened his eyes and stared at the too familiar ceiling of his cell. The slightly scratchy blanket he remembered was covering him. Will closed his eyes, pressed his fists against them and curled into a ball on the side. He had died and was back in the BSHCI. He wasn't sure if he could do this again.

For a while, Will was lying thoughtless and hurting in his bed. After an eternity of emotional despair, he shakily stood up and walked to the sink. He washed his face and drank a bit of water. It tasted metallic, rusty. There was nothing in his cell that could tell him what day or

even month it was. Calling for the orderlies wouldn't help either. It was still night and they wouldn't be happy even if he disturbed them during the day.

So he had to wait, and he couldn't help but feel bad for himself and curse the situation. This continuously dying and waking up at another low point of his life was torture. Will didn't feel like he deserved this. He had wanted to die when he pulled them over the cliff. Had wanted them to go out together. He didn't want this; being separated from Hannibal over and over again by different levels of their shared past, different levels of change they had committed on each other.

For a while, he contemplated killing himself. He wasn't in a high-security cell. There were means to end his life. Not painless, but he had endured pain before. If his theory was true, he would move backwards. He might wake up in a time before the BSHCI. But he didn't know what time of the day it was and he didn't want to risk being found and placed on suicide watch.

Instead of acting, Will waited. The daytime lighting was switched on and someone brought breakfast. Will remembered that the meals were different depending on the day of the week, but he couldn't remember what day gruel was served. And what would it matter to know what day of the week it was anyway? It wouldn't tell him when *in* the timeline he was. The orderly with the breakfast hadn't been Matthew Brown, maybe it was after Matthew Brown's attempt to kill Hannibal. On the other hand, Matthew Brown hadn't always brought him his meals.

He couldn't make himself eat and walked up and down in his cell instead. He was hungry for information, not for food. When the orderly came to get his tray, he brought a plastic bag with clothes with him.

The trial? Will thought. But he had been wearing a suit for the trial, and it didn't look like a suit. A moment later Will felt a deep sense of relief and gratitude. He remembered this moment.

"What's going on?" he asked after the orderly had taken his tray and pushed the bag through the opening in the bars. He pulled the bag through and hugged it like a lifeline.

"Just heard you are being released," the man said, tight-lipped.

The last time Will had pestered him with questions. He didn't bother this time. When the man was gone, Will closed his eyes and pressed the clothes bag closer.

"Thank you," he whispered. He wasn't sure who he was thanking. Hannibal or the forces moving him around, but right now he didn't care. He could go home.

He dressed quickly, not caring about the cool air. He had to wait for Chilton, but it only took a minute before the man waltzed up to the cell. Will didn't want to speak with him at all. He just wanted out as soon as possible.

"The federal prosecutor dropped all charges against you," Chilton explained without Will's prompting. "Since you weren't convicted of killing anyone, the basis for your sentencing to

this institution is null and void. The Chesapeake Ripper has set you free."

"Well," he said with a rough voice and had to clear his throat. "I'm ready to go."

Chilton nodded and waved his cane at the camera. Will heard the buzzer and his cell door opened. He stepped out, feeling lighter after the small step. He walked towards the exit of the cell block and Chilton walked hurriedly beside him.

"I'd love seeing you trade places with Dr. Lecter," Chilton said and the familiarity of his words annoyed Will. He remembered them talking. He also remembered being waylaid by Jack on his way out. Will wondered for a moment if he should go through it again. Tell Chilton to confess and walk through Hannibal's workshop with Jack. But the thought of doing all this a second time was tiring. He stopped in his tracks and looked at Chilton who came to a stumbling halt.

"Is Jack Crawford waiting for me?" Will asked and Chilton looked back, surprised.

"Yes," he confessed. Will looked at the door, thinking.

"I'll make you a deal," he said, looking back at Chilton. "You call me a cab and make sure I can take it without meeting Jack and I'll tell you what I think Hannibal is planning. It concerns you."

He could see Chilton's mind working through the expressions on his face. Protest about having to do something first, then the worry about being involved in any plans of Hannibal Lecter. And then he was calculating what Will could possibly know after being incarcerated for so many weeks. His fear of Hannibal won.

"Alright," Chilton agreed.

They left the cellblock and Chilton called his assistant on the house phone. The cab was called and instructed to wait at a side exit. Will followed Chilton out and he looked expectantly at Will as they arrived at the side door.

"I'm exonerated, but Hannibal is not incriminated," Will started to explain. "And new attention has been brought on the Chesapeake Ripper."

"By you," Chilton said exaggerated.

Will smiled.

"Yes, by me and most likely also by Hannibal with the way I got free. Ask Jack about it."

Startled, Chilton nodded.

"He wanted me free and he accepted possible investigations into the Ripper and his person for that. But Hannibal Lecter is too much of a control freak to not have a backup plan."

"Backup plan?" Chilton asked, clueless.

"Blame someone else," Will told him and widened his smile. "Someone with a similar background. A medical doctor who now works in psychiatry. Someone who once put forward a possible candidate for the identity of the Ripper in the FBI's path and was proven wrong."

Chilton blanched as he realized what Will was implying.

"Nobody will believe him," he said with fear in his voice.

"I didn't think anyone would consider I killed Abigail and swallowed her ear," Will replied. "Still my colleagues and friends believed the evidence provided. Do you think they will regard you as innocent when they find corpses on your property?"

Chilton's hands were shaking and Will couldn't help but feel a thrill at the reaction. Chilton wasn't running yet, but he only needed a little push.

"Go and ask Jack," he suggested. "I bet something has been found in relation to the Ripper and not just the murders I was accused of. If I'm right about that, maybe I'm also right about the future plan."

"I will…" Chilton said stuttering. "I will speak with Jack."

He turned away without a goodbye and hurried away. Will watched him until he was out of sight and left the building to wait outside for the cab.

The dogs weren't home when he arrived. Well, he was earlier than the last time. He had no keys on him and had to break his back door to get into the house. While some of his possessions were still here, a lot was also gone. His car, his cell phone, his laptop, and his guns had been confiscated, as had most of his fishing gear. All the perishable goods in the kitchen were gone, the bin was emptied, his bed was stripped. The house felt weirdly lonely and robbed of parts of its personality. He checked the barn, and the freezer had been emptied too.

Awesome, he thought sardonically. Alana must have brought some food when she brought the dogs over last time. He felt weirdly guilty about it. She knew he had tried to kill Hannibal and still had provided food. And Jack must have made sure his car was here after their little excursion to Hannibal's workshop. Maybe he shouldn't have avoided him at the hospital.

Unsure what to do next, Will made some coffee from some weak smelling leftover grounds he found in his kitchen. He sat down with the cup of black coffee on the stairs of his veranda and just looked at the open sky. He had drunk half of his mug when he heard the car. He saw it drive up to the house a minute later. Will sighed and felt reminded of the day Jack had come to make him work on the Red Dragon case. He didn't get up when Jack parked and got out of his car.

"Will."

"Jack."

Jack assessed him with a gaze and then tried to surprise him: "We found Miriam Lass. Alive."

Will didn't blink and took another sip from the now lukewarm coffee.

"But you didn't catch the Ripper."

Jack shook his head and Will didn't reply.

"I would have given you a ride back home," Jack continued as if Will wasn't ignoring him as much as he could. "If you hadn't left the hospital so abruptly."

"Spent a lot of time I shouldn't have there," Will replied. "Don't think anyone can blame me for wanting to get out quickly."

"Miriam thanked me, when we found her, for not giving up on her," Jack told him while watching him closely, calculating. "But I did give up on her and you. I thought you were crazy. I stopped trying to find both of you."

Will shrugged. He didn't really care about Jack or the investigation. He had done this once already.

"I want my stuff," he said abruptly and saw Jack falter. He even looked a bit shocked about the change of topic. "What hoops do I have to jump through so I get it soon?"

Jack blinked and Will was thrilled at the reaction and then a bit afraid as Jack's face hardened.

"Help me catch the Ripper."

"I told you his name," Will answered. "Not sure what else you want from me."

"I put Miriam in a room with Hannibal Lecter. She stated definitively that he is not the Chesapeake Ripper."

"Not definitive enough for you," Will said as he considered his options.

"No. It wasn't."

Will sighed.

"I will look at where you found Miriam, and I will speak with her, but I want my stuff and I want back pay for the time you kept me locked up… and some termination pay."

"You want to quit?"

"I don't want to do this anymore, Jack. I want to take my dogs and leave. Tell them I'll sign something agreeing not to sue for the numerous broken regulations that led to my incarceration."

Jack looked at him like a disappointed teacher or parent. Will felt relieved at not being bothered by it.

"Fine," Jack said. "We'll go now. You'll check the scene and I'll make the calls on the way."

As promised, Jack made the calls on the way to the workshop. Alana, Purnell, evidence lockup - some of the discussions were tense, but mostly Jack moved the things as Will wanted them to. He felt slightly pacified by the time they arrived. He listened to Jack's debriefing and then Will began to lead him through the same insights as the last time they had done this. The Ripper's kills were theater. Miriam hadn't been taken to the property to be killed. Jack finding her had been planned. But then Will diverted and built up on what he had told Chilton. Hannibal would incriminate Chilton, maybe by incriminating himself.

Jack didn't seem convinced, but Will just shrugged as Jack tried to argue with him. Will wondered what Chilton had discussed with Jack and what Chilton would do now. Maybe he would run, or maybe we wouldn't.

Jack stayed at the workshop and let an agent drive Will back home. The house sat nestled between the trees as they arrived and Alana's car was in the driveway. Will smiled at the memory of coming home the first time. When he remembered the conversation he was about to have with Alana his smile vanished.

He walked up to the porch and saw Alana open the door. Will smiled again when the dogs squeezed past her and he dropped to his knees. They were so happy to see him and he couldn't help but reflect their happiness and let it engulf him. He petted them smiling wide and happy.

"Welcome home," Alana said. Will looked up and saw her smile against her will.

"Thank you. Thank you for taking care of them," he repeated as he had the first time. Before she could react, he petted Applesauce and asked: "And who's this?"

"Applesauce. She's mine. She likes applesauce. I rescued her."

Will stayed on his knees to be small and nodded. He knew she was afraid of what he had done and was capable of doing. Alana came closer and attached a leash to Applesauce's collar.

"Thank you again," he said standing up as she led Applesauce away. Alana frowned as she stopped. She seemed to think about saying something without finding the words. For a second Will thought about speaking. He could warn her or defend himself. He could even pretend to have changed his mind about Hannibal and ask for her forgiveness. But he knew

the urge came from missing his friend of so many pasts, especially the one in which he had been Hannibal's lover and the original past he remembered. But his tiredness won out and he turned without speaking, calling for the dogs as he walked back to the house. He made himself not look back.

Inside, he sat down on the ground and let the dogs lick him and preen for attention while he tried to listen out for Alana's car. He couldn't of course, her hybrid was not loud enough. He stood up later and checked through the window. Her car was gone and he was alone with his dogs.

Still missing most of his things, Will took the dogs for a walk to distract himself. He was divided between fretting over what to do and trying not to think about it at all. In the end, he decided to play with the dogs. But their presence just reminded him of their fates in other timelines and didn't calm him as they usually would.

When he reached a small river close to his home, he sat down beside the stream and watched the water flow by. The dogs ran around, only Winston sat down beside him, letting his tongue hang out in a doggish smile.

"How about we just run off, Winston?" he asked the dog. "I'll just pack all of you in the car and we can drive off, away from here and Hannibal and all the craziness."

Winston didn't answer of course. He just pressed against Will's side.

"Yeah," Will said as if the dog had answered. "Might be difficult to find hotels that will let y'all in."

He hugged Winston with one arm and pulled him closer. Pushing his face into his fur felt good. The other dogs realized Will was cuddling and came to get attention too. Laughing, Will petted them and then stood up. It was time to return to his house.

His car and some irritated agents with boxes were waiting for him. Will ignored their mood but happily took his car keys and the boxes from them before he sent them away. Jack had moved fast and he would have to meet Miriam soon. But for the moment he unpacked. He had to plug in his phone and laptop to start them, but they still worked and his phone contract was still active. He had only been in the BSHCI for a few weeks at this point after all. He tried to log into his bank account but had a weird note about it being locked on it. He considered calling them, but he had used his credit card successfully for the cab earlier, so he expected he would be able to withdraw cash the following day. He could live without cash for today and it was late. If it was still a problem tomorrow, he would call his bank then.

Will spent the rest of the day putting away his belongings. He felt the need to reclaim the house but couldn't connect to his surroundings. Apart from the dogs, nothing felt real to him. He had seen many different versions of his house now and of Hannibal, Alana, and Jack.

He slept in front of the fireplace he never used to burn evidence, surrounded by dogs he had

never given away. As he was falling asleep, Will thought that the present lost substance with every timeline he experienced.

The next day brought a wakeup call from Jack. He told Will when he could meet Miriam. Will was too sleepy to ask about his pay but declined a lift; he wanted to drive now that he had his car back. He made more coffee for himself and fed the dogs from the kibble Alana had provided. He would have to make them food soon. He showered, trimmed his beard and resisted the urge to use his hair trimmer to get rid of the mop of hair he had accumulated in the BSHCI. He would need a cut soon.

On his way to Quantico Will wondered how Hannibal was doing. Last time he had been released from the BSHCI he had visited Hannibal and had held a gun to his head. If he didn't pay Hannibal attention now that he was free, Hannibal would make sure he inserted himself in Will's life again. Will missed his Hannibal but wasn't sure if he wanted this one. He wasn't the Hannibal from the cliff top; wasn't *his* Hannibal.

The conversation with Miriam was incredibly familiar. He was too tired from the time jumps and shock of waking up in the BSHCI to have rebuilt his barriers. It was hard to speak to Miriam. Her trauma nearly overwhelmed him. He was less communicative than the last time, but Miriam still told him everything she had before. It must have weighed heavily on her mind.

Unlike the last time he had experienced this moment, Will went to give Jack a report. He was still rattled by Miriam's emotions. Luckily, he was not just mirroring her trauma but also her strength and determination. It carried him through the conversation with Jack. Still, Will left exhausted. Driving back to his house he realized that he hadn't asked after his pay at all. Well, apart from having one up on Jack, he didn't really care that much about it.

In the original timeline, he had gone to Hannibal and threatened to shoot him around this time. The memory, while clouded by rage and desperation, was sweet in reflection. The way Hannibal had lowered his head in submission. Will wondered if his Hannibal had been unsure then, if this Hannibal was unsure now? He must be. He couldn't know what Will would do. It was a gamble on his side. He had pulled the pigtails to gain attention. In the original timeline Will had given it to him. Maybe this time he shouldn't. He still wanted Hannibal. Even though he knew this wasn't his Hannibal or the one that had been the lover he yearned for. It probably wouldn't be wise to seek him out. He should stay away, get some rest and try not to die for a while.

The next day Will was still drifting. He tried not to think too much but couldn't help wondering what was happening. Had Jack listened and concentrated on Hannibal instead of Chilton? Had Chilton run away? Should he even bother with the whole drama? The idea to just pack up and leave became more alluring the more he thought about it. As Will went over his daily chores of looking after the dogs he mentally went over his jumps through time again. He was reasonably sure he traveled further into the future the longer he stayed in the time before he died. He could just go away and try to live as long as possible, but he felt

uncomfortable thinking about it.

His dogs jumped up as one and started barking agitatedly. Will moved to the window and saw Chilton's red sports car drive up to his house. Will frowned and his hands itched to reach for his guns. He didn't want Chilton here; he wanted his peace and calm.

Chilton got out of the car and just like the last time, his clothes were bloody. Will walked up to the door. As he opened it the dogs streamed out, barking at the stranger and the smell of blood. Chilton, now holding a suitcase, stopped dead. He looked frightened, Will thought. He should be, but not of the dogs. Will felt mostly rage as he walked closer to his visitor.

"May I use your shower, please?" Chilton asked as Will had stepped up to him. Still frowning and unsure why he was so angry with him, Will nodded and led him into the house. Chilton started telling him what had happened. Will only paid him half of his attention. He tried to calm himself and understand his anger. Chilton hadn't done anything he hadn't done before. Chilton went into the shower and Will stood with clenched fists in front of the bathroom door. He imagined hearing Hannibal's voice: *I was rooting for you, Will. It's a shame. Came all this way and you didn't get to kill anybody. Only consolation is Dr. Chilton. Congratulations for the job you did on him. I admired it enormously. What a cunning boy you are.*

He had always been angry with Chilton. He had detested the man from their first meeting. For Will, Chilton was transparent, like a window, in his need for attention. He had wanted to study Will from the beginning. With Will being incarcerated in the BSHCI he had taken his chance. Will wanted to kill him and he suddenly understood his anger. He didn't want Chilton here because it was a temptation. Will stepped closer to the door and placed one hand against it, like he once had before Hannibal's cell.

"I don't have a pathology," he told himself with a whisper and licked his lips.

It would be so easy, he thought a second later. He hadn't called Jack. Without that call, nobody would look for Chilton here. He could kill him and get rid of the car. He could take him apart in a way that none of the king's horses or men would be able to put him back together again. Will saw what he could make of Chilton and the vision blinded out all other options. When the door opened, and Chilton looked at him surprised, Will didn't hesitate, he grabbed his throat and pushed him through the door onto the tiles.

Chilton must have hit his head on the tiles hard because the look of surprise never left his face as Will strangled him. He started to fight back and scratched Will's face. Will barely noticed it as he watched mesmerized as the blood vessels began to bulge and the color of Chilton's face began to darken. There was only panic in Chilton's eyes until they became glassy and it fueled Will's determination to finish him and stop the panic.

Will knew choking was tricky, so he didn't stop it even when Chilton's arm stopped moving and his body went through some final shakes. Only when he felt something warm soaking his knees did he realize Chilton's final act had been to piss on him. He let go.

Chapter End Notes

Season 3 Episode 13 “The Wrath of the Lamb” BACKWARD to

Pre-Season 1 Episode 1 FOWARD to
Season 1 Episode 11 "Rôti" BACKWARD to
Season 1 Episode 6 "Coquilles" FORWARD to

Season 1 Episode 13 "Savoureux" FORWARD to
Season 2 Episode 7 "Yakimono"

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

After the events of "We Killed a Dragon Last Night" Will moved around in time a lot. He recently found himself being released from the BSHCI. Chilton's visit in Wolf trap ended a little different as in the original timeline.

Chapter Notes

Blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc. Have fun, let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

I'm very grateful for my wonderful beta readers: emptyheart, NiaKantorka, Gwilbers and Cathy_Kitty_Pretty.
Thank you so much for all your help! All remaining errors are mine.

Please check out the wonderful gif Sirenja <3 made for the fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will sat beside Chilton's body on the bathroom floor. He was breathing harshly in and out. His heart was racing and he felt good. Even the smell of piss couldn't reduce the enjoyment he had gained from killing Chilton.

"I don't have a pathology," Will repeated as a test and it didn't feel true anymore. He had enjoyed this immensely. He wanted to do it again.

"It's beautiful," Will said, it felt truer, but not right. Hannibal wasn't here to see. His Hannibal.

Practicalities became more urgent as his breath slowed. He stood up, took down the shower curtain and used it to wrap Chilton's body. He carried him into the barn, as he once had with Randall Tier. After he had placed the body on plastic, Will made space for Chilton's car. He drove it into the barn and started the bloody job of dismembering Chilton. He couldn't help himself and started reciting the Humpty Dumpty poem as he severed the limbs from the torso. He placed all of them in plastic bags in his freezer. Before he left the barn, he hid the car under covers.

He had a shower to get rid of the blood and sat down on the stairs in just his boxers, looking down. He couldn't stay here. At some point Freddy Lounds would show up. The lock on his

barn door hadn't kept her out in the original timeline. Of course, he could just kill her for real this time. He didn't really feel guilty about Chilton, though he was a little worried about not feeling guilty. He probably wouldn't feel bad about killing Freddy either. She was a vulture. Will's worry became fear. Was this him, or was he channelling one of his killers? He felt more and more distanced from his surroundings. Will put his head in his hands and pulled on his hair. Sharp pain focused him.

Slowly Will went over all the killers he had empathized with in his life. He hoped to find an explanation for his behavior. He didn't. The only one who was vaguely similar was Eldon Stammets in his desperate search for connections.

"I have connections," Will told himself and listened to the quiet noises of his dogs. The awareness of what was wrong slowly rose in his mind. The dogs downstairs weren't his dogs. Chilton wasn't his Chilton. He had met this Chilton only twice. When the man had him released from the BSHCI and when he arrived at Will's house.

"Not my people," Will whispered. It was easy to kill them because he didn't feel attached to them. He had met many versions of his people at this point and he always lost them. The changes he made didn't matter. When he died, he went back to another point in the original timeline with its ups and downs. Mostly downs, to be honest. Will was tired of it.

"I can control this," Will told himself and stood up. He went downstairs to get dressed. Packing was difficult. He had a feeling that he should pack a lot. After all, he didn't plan to return here, but he also knew all his stuff would be here again if he experienced another death. In the end, he packed essentials for himself and nearly everything for the dogs. They were really agitated as he started carrying their beds to the car. They got annoyed when the travel cages came out. He rarely had all of them in the car at the same time, but he had cages for all of them. It took him an hour to get them all in. He was exhausted when he closed up the house. His phone and laptop were left behind on the kitchen table.

The dogs were noisy and unhappy about being restrained and Will was tired as he drove away from Wolf Trap. He felt desperate for something he couldn't define. At first, Will didn't know where he was going, but as the sun set on the horizon and the world darkened around him he realized what road he was on.

It was well after midnight when he arrived at the cliff house. He had taken great care to travel inconspicuously and had taken side roads whenever possible. The windows of the house were dark. He parked, soothed the dogs with some treats and walked to the house. The key was where Hannibal had gotten it from the last time. Will checked inside. Abigail wasn't there. It surprised him a little. He had expected her to be in the house. He couldn't fathom that Hannibal kept her in his Baltimore house. But, if he remembered correctly, they hadn't found his basement for days after his house became a crime scene. So it was possible she was there.

Will turned on all the lights, went back outside and started to bring his and the dogs' stuff inside. He placed the dog beds all over the living room but away from the dining area and filled their bowls with food and water. The dogs were very impatient when he came for them. He took them out one by one and let them pee while leashed before he brought them back

inside to let them drink and eat. It took over an hour until they were all settled. He knew they wouldn't sleep for long and that he should get some rest as well.

The house had three bedrooms; the master bedroom and two smaller rooms. Both smaller rooms could be locked from the outside only. Will took the master bedroom. He considered showering, but he was bone tired and decided to just lose his pullover and pants before he crawled under the covers. The sheets smelled a little like Hannibal, and Will fell asleep quickly.

The dogs woke him a few hours later. Groggily, Will let them outside. He watched them nervously and had to call them back a few times when they ran too close to the cliffside. It wasn't an ideal area for them to run around. He decided to take them for a walk later. After he had something to eat and coffee.

He fed the dogs first and took a shower. Afterwards, he checked the clothes in the bedrooms. When Hannibal had brought him here in the original timeline, there had been clothes in his size stocked. There weren't this time. A little disappointed, Will got dressed in his own clothes.

The kitchen was complicated. The fridge was empty, but he found oats and honey and made himself some porridge from it. The coffee maker was way above his capability to understand without a manual. He went with unfiltered coffee and drank it slowly. He left his cup and bowl in the sink with a smirk.

Will felt calmer here at the house. He was still tired from all the time jumps he had gone through. But the cliff house felt like a refuge, like the eye of the storm. He had only been here once and despite the violence he had experienced and dealt out, the memory was profoundly soothing. He wanted to sit down and rest, but before that he would need provisions.

He searched the house again, more thoroughly this time. The most useful things he found were a good amount of cash and two sets of license plates. There were also passports for Hannibal and Abigail. He stared at the pictures and missed them. But it was difficult to discern which Hannibal he missed and what he felt about this Abigail who was alive in the here and now. It was very likely he would have to face them soon.

Will heard something break and it shook him out of his thoughts. He went back into the living room and found a very guilty looking Larry and a broken something. He gave the dog a short scolding and got rid of the shards. When he looked over the room afterwards, he cringed, imagining what Hannibal would say about the dogs and the disorder they left behind. He would have to cross that bridge when he came to it.

He screwed a set of the license plates he had found on his car, checked the maps of the area for the closest settlements and left to get supplies. He didn't want to raise suspicion by buying enough meat to feed all his dogs at once, so he visited three towns and bought food in each of them. Hannibal's cash was plentiful and after some consideration Will splurged for some junk food, imagining Abigail being happy to get a break from Hannibal's high cuisine.

Back at the house, he took everything inside. He hid some sweets he had bought in Abigail's room. Like a little welcome present from him. It felt impulsive and maybe overstepping, but also good. Like buying into the little fantasy world of Abigail, Hannibal and him as a family, just as Hannibal had once planned for them. It would most likely not happen, but just playing with the idea in his mind was nice.

He took the dogs for a longer walk along one side of the cliff after he had unloaded all the supplies. The whole area was desolate. He walked for over an hour until he found another building. It was an abandoned lighthouse. The door and lower windows were barricaded. Will sat down beside it and ate the sandwich he had brought with him. The dogs watched him but didn't beg. He threw them some treats anyway. They had behaved quite well for being uprooted by him.

On the way back, Will looked out for ways down the cliff. He found two; both were too steep for the dogs to accompany him. He would have to come back without them to check the walkability.

After he had returned to the house, he gave the dogs water and watched as they dropped on their beds, tired from the long walk. Soon most of them were dozing and Will began the task of making them food. He froze most of what he had made for later. A good bit of the fresh food products he had gotten were gone now. For the first time since he arrived here, Will worried a little about the future instead of just concentrating on the present. At some point, someone would find Chilton's body. The evidence would prove Will had killed him. He would be a wanted criminal. There would be a manhunt and his face would be in the news. It would be more difficult to get supplies without being recognized. And while the different license plates meant his car would not raise immediate suspicion, it would not work forever.

Frowning, Will remembered seeing something in the bathroom. He went there, checked the cabinets again and found hair dye. Will snorted as he realized one of the dyes was for the same brown as Hannibal's hair.

"Are you covering up some grey hair, Dr. Lecter?" Will murmured with a smile and placed the dye on the side. The thought was amusing, but most likely the dye was, like the others, for camouflage purposes. There was enough here to help Will change his appearance a little, and if he stuck to other towns on his next supply run, he might be okay. It was risky, but changing the situation he had created felt like too much of an effort. Instead of bothering with more plans about the future, Will decided to take a nap.

When he woke up, the sun was setting, and when he looked outside, he saw the ocean had darkened. Will stepped outside onto the patio, the dogs followed him, but he ignored them. He walked to the edge of the cliff and looked down. The ocean seemed to wait for him. Will jerked away as something wet touched his hand. He looked down and saw Winston gaze up to him. It was like he was asking Will what he was doing standing so close to the cliff edge. *Don't be a dummy, Will.*

"You are right," Will told the dog and patted Winston's head. "I shouldn't be standing here."

He stepped back and turned towards the house. The dogs were running around, but came quickly when he called them. Most likely they were hungry for their evening meal. He went inside and filled their bowls. Feeding them made him realize how hungry he was himself.

He couldn't be bothered to make anything complicated, so he just scrambled some eggs and made toast in the oven. Hannibal didn't seem to believe in toasters, because he didn't have one. He ate at the dining table and felt lonely sitting there without company.

With the nap he had taken, Will knew he wouldn't sleep again for a while. There was no television in the house, but there were books, and he sat down beside the dogs and read until it was long after midnight. The bed didn't smell like Hannibal anymore, and Will dozed for a long time before he finally fell asleep.

He started the next day by walking the dogs along the other side of the cliff. After only a few minutes, he found a car shelter made of wood and camouflaged with a speckled brownish net hiding in between some vegetation. It was big enough for the Bentley, Will thought and decided he would drive his own car into it after he'd taken the dogs back to the house.

Maybe a quarter of an hour later he found another house. Part of it had already collapsed and part of it was still sitting on the top of the cliff. Will stood and stared at it for a long time. He thought he was a little like the house. He had fallen down into the sea, but part of him was still hanging on, not able or willing to let go. Will thought about sitting on the edge of the cliff, but he had the dogs with him and it would encourage them to go closer to the edge.

Instead he walked around the broken house and followed the cliff's coastline further. There were more abandoned houses, or leftovers of houses, along his path and Will understood the ingenuity of Hannibal choosing his house here. With the instability of the cliff, the locals probably avoided the area because of the dangers. Parts of the cliff could collapse at any time. After a while, the houses became too depressing and Will turned back to walk to his current home. The dogs had picked up on his mood and trailed slowly behind him.

He hid in the house for the rest of the day, only leaving twice to give the dogs some time outside, but he stayed at the house. He read some more and when he got hungry, he raided Hannibal's stocks and ate some of the best olives he had ever tasted with more toast.

He wondered what was happening with Hannibal, Abigail and Jack. Had Jack found Chilton, when he looked for Will? He would have looked for him when he couldn't reach him. Hopefully, he wouldn't find Chilton. And then? They would find Ingram's last victim in a horse. Will tried to feel worried about the woman, but he only felt tiredness. He could probably save her. And when he died, she would be dead again in the next timeline he woke up in. It didn't really matter.

He slept nearly 13 hours that night and woke up to slightly desperate dogs.

"Sorry, sorry," he told them as he stumbled befuddled to the door and let them out. He fed them and checked the fridge unenthusiastically for breakfast. After he had stared blearily into

it for a long time, he decided to go with just coffee. The morning dragged on. After two cups of ground coffee, he was able to shower. He stayed under the water until it ran cold. After getting dressed, he made himself drive the car to the hidden shelter.

He walked back to the house and froze as he saw Jack's car standing in front of it. The question of how Jack could have found him raced through Will's mind before logic dictated it couldn't be Jack. Jack wouldn't have come alone to arrest him.

Hyper aware from the release of adrenalin the sight of Jack's car had caused, Will picked up a stone that fitted nicely in his hand. He walked up to the house, trying to keep every place someone could hide in his line of vision. As he walked around the car, he saw that the keys where in the ignition. He had left the door to the house unlocked and it still was when he pressed down on the door handle. Winston and Larry came up and greeted him. Will felt himself relax a little as he saw the dogs. He walked as quietly as he could into the main room. He stopped in his tracks when he saw Hannibal sitting on the couch, surrounded by Will's other dogs.

"Will," Hannibal said in greeting and Will stepped closer so he could see more than his side. His face looked terrible. The left eye was in the process of swelling shut; there was a butterfly bandage on a cut above it and stitches on a wound under his lip. Hannibal's left hand, which was resting on an icepack on the couch, was bandaged too. He looked like he had gotten a serious beating.

"Is Jack dead?" Will asked. Hannibal looked up sharply. It must hurt him to move, but as usual, he didn't show pain.

"I left him behind at Frederick's last resting place."

Will could see it, the pendulum swung and his imagination pieced together the rest. They had investigated Will's disappearance and when they found Frederick in the barn…

"Jack thought you placed the body there?"

"I believe he was drawn between the hope that I was framing you and the fear of you being responsible. What made you dismember him?"

He sounded honestly curious. Will shrugged.

"Humpty Dumpty got put together before, so I took him apart."

Hannibal tilted his head for a moment. Considering the words, Will thought.

"Fitting," he finally said with a sharp nod. "And will you be David and strike me down with the stone in your hand?"

Will scoffed at the melodramatic question and let the stone drop. Hannibal flinched at the hard thump it made when it hit the floor.

"You look beaten up enough," Will told him. "Don't you have another question you want to ask?"

Hannibal blinked slowly with one eye before he asked: "How did you find the house?"

Will smirked.

"Well," he said and stepped closer to pull the ice pack out from under Hannibal's hand. As he looked into Hannibal's eyes he continued: "I'm a time traveler from the future. Let me get you some more ice."

For a moment, Will drank in the surprise Hannibal couldn't hide. Then he walked around the couch to the kitchen. He felt glee at having shocked Hannibal and grinned widely as he prepared another ice pack. But realizing someone was missing from the situation made his glee fade away.

"Where is Abigail? Did you leave her at your house?" he asked as he came back into the main room and dropped the fresh ice pack beside Hannibal.

"I called her and gave her instructions. She should be able to make her way here but it will take a few days," Hannibal replied. He picked up the ice pack but didn't place it on his eye. "You could have deduced her being alive from her room here."

"And how did I deduce the existence of the house?" Will asked with interest. He wondered if Hannibal would find an explanation for his knowledge. Hannibal, probably forgetting his wounds, frowned for a second before his face was smooth again.

"You couldn't," he said after thinking it through.

"I can tell you more things I shouldn't know," Will offered. He felt weirdly relieved with Hannibal just knowing he wasn't exactly his Will. The idea of confessing to everything that had happened to him was alluring. "But you have to put the ice pack on and explain how the infernal coffee machine works. And did you disable the tracking device in Jack's car?"

"I did," Hannibal said but didn't use the ice pack. "But we should put it under the shelter, or did you place your car there?"

Will sighed.

"My car is there," he said while still thinking. "But there was still some space. Also, my car's color is less conspicuous; I will drive it partially out of the shelter and put some vegetation on top of it."

Luckily, he hadn't taken his jacket off. He eyed Hannibal, who was watching him carefully.

"Make some coffee while I'm gone?" he asked and suddenly felt uneasy at the sight of his

dogs. "And don't kill my dogs, please."

Confusion showed on Hannibal's face at his request. Will couldn't bear it. He turned with a bad feeling and left the house again. As he drove the car towards the shelter, he fretted over leaving the dogs behind with Hannibal. There was no reason for Hannibal to hurt them, but the memory of the gunshots were at the forefront of Will's mind. He hurriedly arranged the two cars under the shelter and camouflaged the part of his own car that wasn't covered as best as he could with vegetation. With only fear to keep him company the walk back took an eternity.

The dogs, all of them, and the smell of coffee greeted him as he stepped back into the house. Will felt foolish, but also relieved at the sight of his little pack. He petted them, took his jacket off and went into the main room. Hannibal was lying on the couch and had the ice pack on his face. He lifted it as Will came into the room to look at him.

"I will get the coffee," Will said quickly and left for the kitchen. After the fear he had just experienced, he didn't feel ready to face Hannibal. The short respite of filling himself a mug with groundless coffee helped him to calm down.

Buster had jumped onto the couch and was lying on Hannibal's lap when Will came back into the main room with his coffee.

"Buster!" Will said sharply. "Get down!"

The dog complied hurriedly and Hannibal, who had taken off the ice pack again, watched Will curiously.

"Were you afraid I would hurt him?" Hannibal asked.

Will frowned, not understanding the question. Flushing, he remembered his request before he left.

"No," he said and sat down in an armchair. "They just aren't generally allowed on the furniture."

Not looking at Hannibal, Will sipped his coffee. The confidence he had felt as he told Hannibal he was a time traveler was gone. Now, showing all his cards made him nervous.

"But you believe me capable of hurting your dogs?"

Will scoffed. "I know you are. You… a version of you, killed two of them."

He quickly checked Buster and Winston's whereabouts and relaxed when he spotted both of them.

"Would you tell me about it?" Hannibal asked. Will looked to him. He had sat up a little and was pressing the ice pack against his swollen eye. Will took a deep breath and nodded.

"But I must start earlier," he said and leaned back in the armchair. "With the first time I was released from Chilton's care."

Will told his story slowly and, to his surprise, without any questions from Hannibal. When Will reached their final confrontation in Hannibal's kitchen and Abigail's death, Hannibal became twitchy and straightened his sleeves repeatedly. He sat up when Will came to the end of this part of the story and placed the melted ice pack on the table. He didn't look at Will.

"It makes you uncomfortable to know what you did?" Will asked curiously. He hadn't expected an emotional response from Hannibal. But for Hannibal, this was a strong reaction.

"I have not done them," Hannibal answered after thinking about it for a moment, and Will felt himself smile at what he didn't say.

"But you could do them," Will added in a low voice. "And it makes you feel… bad?"

Their eyes met, and Will felt a familiar jolt of intimacy followed by arousal. He looked away and licked his lips. Getting under Hannibal's skin was always exciting. This Hannibal though, he wasn't the right one. Will realized he didn't really want to have another relationship with a Hannibal who didn't remember their dance with the dragon.

"You are describing a reaction which seems out of character for me," Hannibal said in answer to Will's question.

Will snorted.

"Throwing a temper tantrum when you don't get what you want seems very in character to me."

Hannibal's face showed an indignant expression at Will's words.

"You like to win, to control the outcome of any situation you are in," Will explained, trying to appease Hannibal. "With me, you are often in situations which surprise you. That intrigues or enrages you, depending on the outcome you are confronted with."

The beaten-up face made Hannibal look more hurt then he probably was, Will decided.

"Being gutted is not the only time I was enraged with you?" Hannibal asked.

"No, but let's talk about the other times you violated my mind or body tomorrow."

Hannibal opened his mouth. Will thought he wanted to protest and waved it away.

"I know you need little sleep, but you look like hell and telling you this is hard for me. I want to sleep. If you want to stay awake, feel free. Just don't wake me when you feel the need to stress bake or something."

From the look on Hannibal's face, Will assumed he was considering gutting him again. Surprisingly, he had lost the majority of his fear while he told part of his past. He was more sad and angry at the memory of being hurt and abandoned. If Hannibal wanted a fight, he wouldn't mind giving him one right now.

But Hannibal didn't want to fight him. Instead, he stood up and declared: "You have been using the master bedroom, I will prepare the second bedroom for myself."

Will had to stop himself not to offer his help. Instead, he let the dogs out for a few minutes and stared into the darkening skies. The cliff seemed to call him. Will thought back to the moment inside. He had wanted a fight, had been prepared to die. Wendy yipped at his feet and Will bent down to pick her up. Her curls had gotten long, he would have to cut them soon. The thought was grounding. He kept holding her as he called the other dogs back to the house and only let her down as they had returned to the main room. He didn't see Hannibal anywhere.

After he filled the dog’s bowls with fresh water, Will went back into the master bedroom. Even with Hannibal's tacit consent, it felt weird to be in it with Hannibal in the house. He laid in bed for a long time, listening for breaths he couldn’t hear.

When Will woke up during the night, moonlight was illuminating the room and Hannibal was sitting in a chair, watching him.

"Can't sleep?" Will asked sleepily before he remembered why Hannibal shouldn't be in the room with him. When he remembered, it woke him up. He sat up, the blanket fell to his hips, and he was relieved to be wearing a crumpled shirt. He turned on the night stand lamp and looked back to Hannibal. He was studying Will, his healthy eye very dark. He really couldn't sleep, Will thought. As much as he had tried to challenge Hannibal before, seeing him vulnerable made Will feel soft and forgiving.

"Come to bed," he said with a sigh and pulled the blanket back. Hannibal hadn't been expecting this and it showed on his face. He seemed to consider the offer for long seconds before he stood up and walked, unusually stiff and uncoordinated for him, to the bed. He sat down, still watching Will. Will sighed again.

"You are a stubborn asshole," he told Hannibal and reached out for his hand. Gently, he pulled Hannibal forward towards him and onto the bed. Will's instinct was to kiss and embrace. He yearned for the oblivion an orgasm would bring them. But this wasn't his Hannibal. So Will pulled him onto his side and placed the blanket over both of them.

"You went back to him," Hannibal said with no emotions in his voice. He was lying on his side, watching Will, and Will was watching him in return.

"I went and searched for him," Will answered. He wanted to reach out and stroke his face, touch the sharp contours of Hannibal's cheekbones. He didn't. "I will tell you all about it tomorrow."

He turned his back on Hannibal to switch the light off and didn't turn back. He lay still and listened to Hannibal's breath. At some point, he fell asleep.

His head was lying on Hannibal's chest when he woke. Hannibal's arms were around his waist and their legs were entangled. Will felt warm and relaxed and he wanted to rub against Hannibal. The dogs barked in the distance and Will startled out of doziness. He looked up, his curls hanging in his face and met Hannibal's watchful gaze. His face looked very colorful from the beating he had taken and his eye was still swollen shut.

"I will look after the dogs," Will said hastily and pushed himself up. Hannibal's hold on his waist loosened and Will shuddered slightly as Hannibal's hands smoothed over him as he moved.

Hannibal wasn't in the bedroom when Will came back from his morning routine with the dogs. With his gentler feelings on the surface, Will wasn't angry about having a longer respite. He went for a shower. The shower cubicle was wet, Hannibal must have taken one before him. Afterwards, he got dressed in fresh clothes. He couldn't avoid Hannibal any longer. He found him in the kitchen, no surprise there. Delicious smelling food was being prepared.

"How are you feeling?" Will asked to preemptively stop any poking into his own mind.

"My injuries are processing as expected," was his nebulous answer. Will assumed he shouldn't worry about Hannibal. The man always looked out for himself.

"Would you set the table?" Hannibal asked and Will nodded. He carried plates and cutlery into the main room and placed them. A meal with Hannibal was something Will looked forward to, but it also felt repetitive. No matter when in time he was, it was always about food and death, or death and then food with Hannibal.

Compared to his own attempts to feed himself in the last few days, Hannibal's breakfast spread was heaven. Will was ravenous and had to make himself eat slowly. He was filling his plate for a second time when Hannibal had finished and felt him watching as he ate.

"Will you tell me what happened after my counterpart left you in his kitchen?" Hannibal asked when Will was done eating. Will leaned back with a satisfied sigh and picked up his coffee mug. He didn't feel like telling Hannibal more at the moment. He just wanted to sit here with him, drink coffee and relax.

"Let's take the dogs for a walk when we are finished with breakfast and I will continue then," he suggested as a compromise and Hannibal nodded. He even left Will in peace until he was ready to leave.

It was windy outside and the dogs were full of energy. They took a landward path instead of going along the cliffs. Hannibal knew the way. With all the wind, Will had to stay close to Hannibal if he wanted to be heard.

"Abigail died," he started. "But Jack, Alana, and I lived."

Telling about his recovery was quickly done. Hannibal, as before, didn't ask any questions until Will told him about hallucinating Abigail.

"Did you speak with someone about the hallucinations?"

Will snorted.

"You think I would get another psychiatrist after my first one gutted me?"

"It could have been a reoccurrence of the encephalitis."

"I knew I was making Abigail up," Will said. "As much as I wanted her not to be dead, I knew she was. Hallucinating her was… a coping mechanism. She was the one person who understood…"

He stopped and purposely concentrated on the dogs who were running around. Hannibal didn't ask anything, he gave Will the time he needed and Will was grateful for it.

"She understood why I still wanted to be with you, even after you had killed her and hurt me."

He turned back to Hannibal.

"I would have gone with you… him. I wanted to. But he didn't let me."

"In his eyes, you betrayed him, Will."

"And he didn't betray me?" Will asked, feeling his temper rise. "He hid the encephalitis from me, he framed me for murder and he made me believe I killed Abigail! He expected me to forgive him but couldn't forgive me?!"

Will hadn't shouted his last words, but it had been close. Hannibal seemed delighted in his outburst.

"You said you went after him," Hannibal said nearly smiling. "But not to be with him. You wanted revenge."

"Yes!" Will shouted with balled fists.

"Did you succeed?" Hannibal asked.

"No," Will deflated as he spoke. "I didn't. I left for Europe on a sailing boat and traveled to Lithuania."

That shut Hannibal up. The nearly smile vanished from his face. Will continued in his story, he didn't draw it out, but he also didn't skip over the discoveries he made which must be

painful for Hannibal to hear.

The man was a dark, silent cloud beside Will. Hannibal only seemed to brighten when Will told him about the tableau he had left at Lecter Vargas and then again when he reached the moment when Chiyo threw him off the train. Will thought he even saw a quick smile on his face at that.

"Last time I told you she pushed me off the train, you said 'atta girl'," Will said accusingly.

Hannibal smiled wider at Will's words.

"It is a very promising development," Hannibal answered. "As is you manipulating her into killing her tenant."

Will rolled his eyes as they stepped back into the house. The dogs were exhausted from the walk and Will was hungry again. As if reading his mind, Hannibal offered to make lunch. Will agreed and went to help. They found themselves in the kitchen, again.

"I traveled to Florence," Will continued as Hannibal handled him some carrots to cut. "Like now, you looked beaten up when I found you."

He went backwards a bit and explained what had happened to Hannibal in Florence as far as he knew. It was the first time Hannibal asked questions and Will found himself shrug more often than he was able to answer. He hadn't been there.

Will found it ironic that he started telling Hannibal about getting his brain sawn open when they sat down for lunch. First, Hannibal stared at his plate without eating. He then placed his cutlery beside the plate. Will felt a little gleeful because Hannibal didn't want to eat.

"It seems like a slight overreaction on my part."

"You don't say."

"Are you sure, you are not embellishing your narrative?"

Will laughed.

"You don't get why he did it?"

"I understand his wish to consume you," Hannibal said. "But my wish for you to live and evolve outweighs the urge to end you. I cannot imagine that would change."

Will considered Hannibal's words. It was a heavy-hearted confession for Hannibal. He wanted to just answer: *But you did*. It wasn't a good answer, though. He hadn't completely understood Hannibal's reasoning for sawing him open and eating his brain. The violation had been horrifying and he preferred not to think about it. He tried to understand now and let the pendulum swing.

"You loved me," Will said slowly, "and you didn't want to lose me. It was the only way you knew would keep me with you. Consume me instead of facing the certainty of loss."

Will looked up and met Hannibal's gaze. A shiver went through him. He felt exposed. Looking away was not easy.

"You didn't eat my brain anyway," he made himself say. "You were interrupted."

Avoiding Hannibal’s eyes, Will continued his story with their journey to Muskrat Farm. It was tempting to fall into his past mindset. He had only wanted to kill and make sure they survived at that point. The feelings had been glorious in their straightforwardness. He stopped speaking when he reached their escape.

"Would you like to take a break?" Hannibal asked.

Will nodded, not sure what he would say next.

"I will clear the table to give you some time."

Hannibal started to take care of the remainders of their meal. Will sat still. He watched Hannibal when he came into the room. Watched him move and imagined the number of killings his Hannibal must have carried out on the farm. He had destroyed everyone between them, and the thought turned Will on.

He had feared those wires were crossed, but hoped it was only temporary. Sex and killing were as interconnected as Hannibal and he were now. Will was startled out of his musings as Hannibal returned to the room. He was carrying a plate with sliced fruits. Will stared at them; he seriously considered asking Hannibal to come to bed. Take the fruit with them to feed to Hannibal by hand. Let him suck the juice from his fingers.

Will stood up abruptly and mumbled something about getting fresh air before he left through the door to the patio. Only when he was outside did he realize he wasn't wearing shoes and it wasn't very warm. He didn't go back inside. He couldn't face Hannibal right now. Telling him the events of the original timeline was confusing. His thoughts and emotions from his personal past were swapping over into the now. Will wasn't sure what he really felt right now and what he only remembered feeling.

This Hannibal was the focus point of the confusion. Will didn't know how to deal with this version of him.

In only his socks, Will walked over the stones to the cliff. He stood on the edge and looked out at the water. The door opened behind him and Will heard soft steps. A blanket was placed over his shoulders and Hannibal stepped beside him while watching the sea.

"I tricked you into giving yourself up to the FBI," Will confessed. He needed to finish this and concentrate on the present again. Digging around in the past was just too confusing and painful.

"You got committed to the BSHCI. Alana had taken it over. I never visited. I ran away and met a woman." He paused for a moment. "She was kind and liked dogs and had a son from a previous marriage. I married her and hid from everything."

Still without looking at Hannibal, Will took a deep breath and exhaled loudly. It didn't help him relax.

"A man started killing families. Jack came for me after the second family died. During the case, we found out that the killer was interested in you. So, we used you as bait for the killer we were hunting. You escaped with me and we came here, to this house. The killer attacked us and we fought him."

Behind himself and Hannibal, Will could feel the shade of the dragon rising.

"We killed him together… it was beautiful."

Will licked his lips and hugged himself under the blanket.

"I pulled us over the edge of the cliff and… woke up months before we met for the first time."

For a long time, there was only the sound of the sea and of the birds in the sky. It was Hannibal who broke the silence.

"Instead of dying you traveled into the past?"

"I think so. And it wasn't the last time it happened. I have died four times now, and every death made me move around within my own timeline. Only I remember what happened before; you never do and neither does anybody else."

"Come inside," Hannibal said gently after a moment. Will turned his head to look up at him. Hannibal was staring at the edge of the cliff. Will hugged himself tighter. Hannibal saw the movement out of the corner of his eyes.

"Come," he said again and went ahead. Will followed him.

Back in the house, Hannibal went into the kitchen, and Will stood in the main room, with the blanket over his shoulders, feeling adrift. He considered following Hannibal, traipsing behind him like a lost dog, but he thought that maybe Hannibal needed a break too. Hearing all this must have been at least as exhausting for him. Will had experienced the events and had years to work through them. For this Hannibal, it was all new. Will knew Hannibal didn't feel as deeply as regular people. But the new discoveries about Will and being reminded of his childhood had to emotionally touch him at least a little bit. He had to be stressed at the moment. Giving him a break was only fair.

Tired, Will sat down in front of the couch. Buster and Wendy used the chance to come and

get some attention. Apart from the walks, he hadn't really given them any in the last few days. He would have to make some time to play with them soon. Will sighed. He didn't feel like it, but he would make the time. He wondered if he was depressed and if he cared if he was. He wanted to hold on, but the world felt very transient.

Hannibal came back into the room, carrying a steaming mug. Will smelled something fruity and spicy. Hannibal handed him the mug and Will carefully took it. Surprisingly, Hannibal sat down on the ground beside him. Buster, always curious and excited, went to him. Hannibal petted him once before he ignored him in favor of asking Will: "What did you do in the past?"

Looking down in the mug and inhaling the delicious spicy fruit smell, Will swallowed.

"I didn't understand what had happened first," he said. "I wondered if I was hallucinating or if the encephalitis had reoccurred. But I knew things I couldn't know without the future really having happened. It really was the past."

He sipped from the mug; flavors exploded on his tongue. Will smiled.

"This is good."

Hannibal didn't react and Will became aware that he was trying to distract. Telling this Hannibal about starting a relationship felt a bit embarrassing.

"You hesitated less about telling me how you betrayed me to Jack," Hannibal said. Will glanced at him. The corners of Hannibal's mouth were curled up. Will licked his lips.

"If it helps, I have already concluded we had a sexual relationship at some point in your personal past."

Will closed his eyes. So, that's what the amusement was about.

"Did you smell it on me?" he asked sarcastically.

"I've smelled your arousal a few times since I arrived, yes. Together, with the ease with which you invited me into your bed, I made an educated guess."

Will sighed, it was becoming a habit.

"I wanted to be with you," he said and heard the yearning in his own voice. It made him feel weak. "But I was worried about being too obvious if I approached you directly."

He continued to explain his plan to seduce Hannibal with murder tableaus. It made him feel exposed to show how far he was willing to go. Will purposely reminded himself of his Hannibal giving himself up to Jack. If Hannibal had let himself be caught, Will could tell how he had tried to win the Hannibal in the past.

A few times, when Will explained a murder, he thought Hannibal wanted to ask for more.

More description, more details about what he had felt while killing. But the questions never came.

His mug was empty when he reached the point of killing Bedelia. He put it on the floor and pulled the blanket closer around himself before he continued. When he came to his first death after he started time traveling, Will stopped and stared at the dogs lying around.

"I don't think he killed your dogs," Hannibal said and the words startled Will. He looked questioningly to Hannibal.

"I heard the shots," he prompted.

"I rarely use guns; I find them very impersonal. If I wanted to hurt you by killing the dogs, why not cut their throats while you watch? Like my future version did with Abigail."

Will shook his head slowly.

"No," he denied Hannibal's theory. "He killed the dogs."

"Did you hear barks?"

Will didn't answer him. But he tried to find the bark in his memories. The other dog would have barked if Hannibal shot one of them. He didn't remember a bark. The realization that Hannibal had a point and something wasn't right bloomed in Will. He understood suddenly that maybe Hannibal had faked the dogs' death. Will buried his face in his hands and felt tears forming in his eyes. Hannibal probably hadn't killed his dogs and becoming aware of that broke his heart.

"I could have stayed," he whimpered.

"Maybe," Hannibal said in a pensive tone. "What happened after, Will? You said you traveled more than once through time.

Will took some shaky breaths and wiped the tears from his eyes. He concentrated on Hannibal's question because it was easier than thinking about his lost chance. He tried to tell him what followed as concisely as possible. It was difficult. The jumps had come so quickly and the fever and the encephalitis confused everything in his memory. Still, he managed a more or less straight narration of the different pasts he had been in and how he had come to the cliff house. When he finished, he felt exhausted. He was surprised that it was still bright outside because it felt like it had taken a long time to tell his story. But it was only afternoon.

Hannibal was sitting motionless beside him and said: "I believe you."

Will blinked. He hadn't thought that Hannibal had doubted him, but obviously from the comment he had.

"A fascinating dilemma you are in, Will."

He stood up and Will watched him walk to the window and look out to the cliff edge.

"Do you think you will stop jumping through time when you have returned to the moment you originally took us over the cliff?"

That was a good question. The underlying implication, that maybe he wouldn't, was terrifying. Will gripped the blanket around his shoulders like a lifeline and didn't answer.

"Or maybe you will just go back again to the first point in time you woke up. Forever circling through possible lives." Hannibal suddenly turned and focused on Will.

"Why do you think this is happening to you?"

Swallowing, Will shook his head.

"I don't know," he answered. "There doesn't seem any way to find out why it's happening to me, so why fret over possible reasons?"

"Understanding the reason of your time jumps might help you control them."

"I know the pattern of when I jump," Will said, shrugging. "I'm not allowed to kill you. If I do, I jump backwards."

"And if one of us dies otherwise, you jump forward," Hannibal continued and tilted his head with a thoughtful expression on his face. "Is that your goal, Will? Do you want to go forward?"

That was a very good question, Will thought. A frown formed on his face. For a few moments he thought about the options that going forward or backward would give him. There were possibilities, but it all felt so difficult to him.

"I can't do it, Hannibal. The scheming and lying and manipulating. That's not me," he said and ran his hands through his hair. "And I'm so tired. I don't know how to keep doing this. I just… I just want to…"

Will let go of his hair and looked up to the window and the cliff's edge.

"I want to finish my fall with you," he whispered.

"That could be considered suicidal."

Will huffed.

You think? he thought sarcastically.

"But I can understand your need to return to the Hannibal that shares all your experiences with you."

Hannibal sounded sad in his own way. Will concentrated on him instead of on the cliff. His face seemed emotionless, but Will could feel him brooding over something.

“What’s wrong?”

Hannibal sighed and came back to the couch. He didn’t sit down on the floor. This time he sat on the couch. Looking up, Will found Hannibal’s face no longer expressionless. He was sad.

“I can understand because I too wish to return to the Will you have replaced. In my case, I don’t believe it will ever happen. The way to your Hannibal is my Will’s death.”

It took Will a moment to understand. He inhaled sharply when it hit him.

If he wasn’t dreaming or hallucinating, then he, or better, his mind, had taken the place of the other Will’s consciousness. He took over the other Wills’ lives and ended them with death. There was no doubt in Will about this conclusion. If his time jumps and the timelines he ended up in were real, then they still existed when he was gone, with all the changes he had brought.

“Oh my god,” Will said. His breath sped up. He felt a hand touch his head and fingers grip his curls.

“Relax, Will,” Hannibal ordered. Will wanted to comply, but he remembered another Hannibal kneeling over him as he bled out, wanting Will to hold on. Shaking his head, Will tried to stand up and run. Hannibal’s hand in his hair didn’t let him. Hannibal used Will’s move upwards to pull him beside him on the couch.

“I left you!” Will said, panicked. He felt tears forming in his eyes again. “And I killed you. That other Will, he will wake up and you will be gone. He will have killed you!”

“And from what you told me, he will be glad for it when my basement is found,” Hannibal said. He was pulling Will into his arms and stroked over his back.

“But he will be alone!” Will said. He heard the hysteria in his own voice. His head dropped on Hannibal’s shoulder. “As will the other Hannibals. They will never have what we… I had.”

He could see and feel their loneliness. It stretched out endlessly in Will’s mind and the worst part was, not all of them knew what they had lost. They would go through life incomplete, only being vaguely aware that something was missing. They would be like him before he met Hannibal.

Hannibal froze for a second under Will’s touch,“You are not the one who is moving you through time,” he said as he petted Will’s hair. “Therefore, you are not at fault.”

“But I changed things….”

“It’s in human nature to change our surroundings to fit our needs. What other choice did you

have? Pretend you are the Will of that time and repeat your life over and over without alteration? I dare say you would go mad quickly."

"I could have tried," Will said with only a little force in his words. Hannibal had a point. Just doing the same as he had done before and living out his life was impossible. Stagnation was no longer an option for Will. He was an evolving being.

"I'm sorry for your Will," he said.

"It's not you who is moving you through time," Hannibal repeated after a moment of stillness and cupped Will's face. He seemed to search for something. Will wasn't sure if he had found it when he spoke again. "We can stay here for a while and you can rest."

With a feeling of relief, Will nodded. He wanted that. Just stay with Hannibal and rest.

"You should take a nap," Hannibal told him and let go of his face. "This was exhausting for you."

Will laughed shakily.

"I don't think I can sleep right now."

"I have some medication if you want it," Hannibal offered.

The idea of getting knocked out for a few hours was wonderful. Still, he hesitated with a look at his dogs.

"I can take them out for a walk before I go to bed," Hannibal offered.

"They need some kibble and water too."

"I will feed and water them after the walk," Hannibal promised.

Will, in all honesty, didn't think too deeply about it. He wanted a break, and Hannibal's drugs would give him one. He nodded.

"Get ready for bed and I will get what you need."

Will went to the bathroom. He relieved himself and brushed his teeth. He took off his socks, pants and shirt and walked in only his boxers and undershirt into the bedroom. It was very bright and Will closed the curtains to keep out the light.

Hannibal came into the room as Will was pulling back the covers to lie down. He gave Will a glass of water and two pills. Will swallowed them dry and sipped on the water as an afterthought.

"It will take a few minutes to kick in," Hannibal said and helped Will get into bed and pull

the covers over him.

“Are you tucking me in?” Will asked. He didn’t feel sleepy, but he was calmer than before.

“I believe I just did,” Hannibal answered. Will could hear the smile in his voice, even if no motion showed on Hannibal’s face.

“Stay until I’m asleep?”

Hannibal didn’t answer with words. He just sat down on the corner of the bed and petted Will’s hair.

He likes the curls, Will thought and relaxed into the touch.

“I will look after the dogs,” Hannibal told him again and Will closed his eyes. He could feel the drugs starting to work.

“And I will look after Abigail,” he said. Will found the sentence a little weird, but he wasn’t sure why. “When you think about me, Will, don't worry about me. And don’t see this as a cruelty, it is meant as kindness to speed up your journey.”

“What?” Will asked barely audible. His limbs were heavy and motionless, but he knew something wasn’t right.

Hannibal leaned forward and gave him a chaste kiss on his lips.

“Don’t tell other versions of me what you told me. I’m not a man to share, not even with myself. And I cannot promise that they will let you go too.”

“Good night, sweet Will,” he said, sadness tingeing his voice.

~TWO~

Chapter End Notes

Gwilbers told me to give you my headcanon for this Hannibal:

He waits until Will is dead and then revives him. It’s his times Will that wakes up. Hannibal chains him up until Abigail arrives at the house. They have a reunion and run off to Europe where they live happily together as a murder family with all the dogs.

Season 3 Episode 13 “The Wrath of the Lamb” BACKWARD to

Pre-Season 1 Episode 1 FOWARD to
Season 1 Episode 11 "Rôti" BACKWARD to
Season 1 Episode 6 "Coquilles" FORWARD to

Season 1 Episode 13 "Savoureux" FORWARD to
Season 2 Episode 7 "Yakimono"

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

After the events of "We Killed a Dragon Last Night" Will found himself moving around in time. He told a Hannibal, the one who just set Will free from the BSHCI, about the time jumps. Hannibal's reaction was not was Will expected.

Chapter Notes

Blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc. Have fun, let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

I'm very grateful for my wonderful beta readers: emptyheart, NiaKantorka, Gwilbers and Cathy_Kitty_Pretty.
Thank you so much for all your help! All remaining errors are mine.

Please check out the wonderful gif Sirenja <3 made for the fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will woke, sat up and sleepily looked around. He was in his bed in Wolf Trap. He could see the dogs lying in their beds around the living room. Will sighed and let himself fall back onto the pillows. Hannibal had killed him, again.

"A kindness," Will said in the stillness of his house. He tried not to think and just let Hannibal's words wash over him. *Don't worry about me*, he had said. His Hannibal had said similar words in the BSHCI. Will couldn't help but worry. If he left timelines without versions of Hannibal or himself behind when one of them died, then the Hannibal he had just left was alone now. He felt a fraction of responsibility before the memory of Hannibal's words freed him from it. Will wasn't the one moving him through time. He might be able to influence whether he moved forward or backward, but otherwise he had no control over what happened. The thought made him remember his current situation. He reached for his phone on the bedside table and checked the date.

"Oh boy," Will said and put the phone away. He considered staying in bed. This was not a day he wanted to repeat.

But Buster came to him and yipped for attention. Will turned his head to look at the dog. He wanted to not feel anything for him, but he looked and behaved like his Buster. It wasn't the dog's fault Will was here. They were the most innocent ones in this mess.

He stood up and went through the motions of letting the dogs out and giving them water and food. He considered leaving again, but he had already gone down that route once. Will went to the bathroom and relieved himself. He washed his hands and his face and stared in the mirror for a long time. He rubbed his forehead. *I could test it*, Will thought. He could try to figure out how far he could stretch the rules. He feared his idea a little. Feared taking such a selfish action, but he still felt detached from his surroundings.

Will shook his head and checked the medicine cabinet. There was a nearly full bottle of Aspirin in it, he took some of the pills and went to make coffee. After breakfast, Will spent the morning calling up kennels for the dogs. He couldn't find one which could take all of them and settled on separating the pack into three groups. Even after being separated from them over and over again by the time jumps, it was hard for Will to give them away. He told the dog sitters he had a family emergency to explain his hurry and paid for a week in advance. He left the lab's number in Quantico as contact details beside his cellphone number, just in case.

The house felt empty when he came back without the dogs. He had bought some fast food on the way back and sat down on his veranda with the food and more coffee. He ate while watching the empty fields. His hands found the Aspirin bottle in his pocket and he played around with it after the meal. The rattling of the pills in the plastic bottle was the loudest sound he could hear.

Will remembered eating with Hannibal the day before Abigail died. Hannibal had served lamb, sacrificial lamb he had said. He had offered Will forgiveness, had offered to leave that day with him and forgive all transgressions. Will hadn't been ready to forgive Hannibal though. He wondered if he was ready to forgive Hannibal, all the Hannibals he had met, now.

Being thrown back into events he had long considered the past was ripping open old wounds. There was so much hurt and betrayal between them. It was a wonder Will hadn't died in his original life. In retrospect, he had been very lucky to survive Hannibal when he first met him. Part of him had always thought Hannibal made sure he survived. But the last few time jumps proved luck had been involved too. He had died of the encephalitis at least once. Is was a reminder of how much Hannibal had played with his life.

Will knew the reasoning behind Hannibal's actions. Hannibal couldn't accept Will as he had been before. He couldn't accept a Will he hadn't formed in his image. Sighing, Will stood up and went back into the house. He binned the wrappings of his fast food and went to his desk. He had to do some paperwork, but his mind was reeling. He wondered at what point Hannibal had started to accept Will's boundaries. If he ever had. Will wasn't sure. Going to prison had either been a manipulation or a desperate act not to lose him. Without picking Hannibal's brain about the event, Will just wasn't sure.

He checked all his papers and wrote a last will to ensure the dogs would be cared for in any case. It felt strange doing it. Lonely old people left their pets all their money. He probably had been on the way to becoming that before he met Hannibal. His dogs really had been all he had.

The sun was beginning to set when he finished. He placed the will, his gun, and his mobile phone on the table. If someone came in, they would see them quickly.

The drive to Baltimore in his own car made Will nervous. The last time he had hiked through the woods and then stolen his neighbor's car. He took side roads to avoid being seen by the police. He was nauseous from fear and had to make himself breathe slowly. He reached Baltimore earlier than he had the last time. Pondering if he should go to Hannibal now or wait, Will stopped at a café and got himself another coffee. He had a headache and he took some more Aspirin while drinking the coffee.

He left his car a few streets away from Hannibal's house and walked through the rain and the dark to it. He didn't feel well. The headache was getting worse and was accompanied by some ringing in his ears. He reached the house and hid on the other side of the street. Slightly hyperventilating, he watched until Jack arrived, followed shortly by Alana. He had hoped she wouldn't come without the phone call between them, but some events seemed to be unstoppable. Seeing her fly through the window shocked Will out of his motionlessness.

Breathing heavily he ran over to Hannibal's house and slowly walked towards Alana. He didn't drop to his knees this time, but took of his coat and placed it over her. She tried to speak, blood was bubbling over her lips.

"Shh," Will said and checked her pockets for her phone. Luckily, he found it and dialed. When he left his house, he hadn't thought about this moment. The call connected and he told the operator to send an ERT to Hannibal's address.

"Jack's inside...," Alana said struggling to form words. Will nodded. He knew, of course.

Will stepped into the house and went to the dining room. Even knowing what was happening it was hard for him to concentrate and his breath just didn't slow down. It made him dizzy. He walked around the corner into the kitchen. The lights were on and there was blood and destruction everywhere. Blood pooled from beneath the pantry door. Will barely looked at it, breathing harshly he looked at Abigail and tried to smile. She turned to him and saw him. She was crying.

"Hello… Abigail," he said out of breath.

"Will," she sobbed. "I didn't know what else to do. So I did what he told me to."

Will didn't answer her, he turned around.

"Hello, Will," Hannibal said looming before him.

"You were supposed… to leave," Will said, his breath still going too fast.

"We couldn't leave without you."

Hannibal reached for Will's face and Will leaned into the caress, bracing himself for the pain.

It hurt as badly as the first time when Hannibal penetrated him with the knife. Will groaned and staggered against Hannibal. He reached for him and tried to hold on. Blood spilled out of him as he pressed against Hannibal who was hugging him close.

"Time has reversed," Will gasped and leaned his head back to look at Hannibal. "I think… I can still… surprise… you."

Hannibal had not expected his reaction; how could he have? Will smiled. Hannibal's head tilted and he seemed to smell something. Frowning, he gently let Will down to the floor. Will screamed from the pain the movement caused.

"What have you done, Will?" Hannibal asked.

"You need… to look …after her," Will urged him out of breath. "Don't take… Bedelia…. Abigail…"
He stopped, it was so hard to breathe and the pain of the wound was all consuming. Blood was splashing out of him in a much faster way than the last time. The Aspirin was doing its job. Hannibal started checking his pockets and found the empty bottle of Aspirin in one of them.

"Need to take…," Will tried to continue as Hannibal read the writing on the bottle, "care of… Abigail."

"How much did you take, Will?" Hannibal asked with urgency.

All of them, Will didn't say.

"Promise!" he begged instead. His vision was going hazy. "Take… Abigail."

He didn't get an answer. Hannibal dropped the bottle and pressed his hands against Will's bleeding stomach wound. The resulting pain blinded Will and the world went dark.

~Three~

Will awoke to the smell of dust. He blinked and saw that he was in his house in Wolf Trap. It felt colder than before. He sat up. The dogs' beds were empty. Beside his feet on the bed was a notebook filled with symbols and astronomical looking signs. Will touched his forehead and could feel the fresh stitches. It had worked, even with his half-suicide, he had moved forwards. He had successfully manipulated whatever was happening to him and it felt good.

The door opened and Hannibal stepped into the house. The wounds on his face and the loose hair made Will want to comfort him. He watched as Hannibal walked to the chair beside the bed and sat down. Old regret filled Will's heart. He should have gone with him that time.

Maybe you are close enough, Will thought. Close enough to his Hannibal from the cliff.

"Do we talk about teacups and time…" Hannibal started before Will interrupted him.

“What are we doing here?” he asked and pulled the blankets off his legs. “The FBI will come looking for us here, Hannibal. We should leave right now.”

Will had never seen Hannibal as surprised, well one could even say baffled, as in this moment. Hannibal hadn’t expected his reaction. Will smirked as he got out of bed and stepped waveringly up to Hannibal. He leaned down, put one hand on Hannibal’s shoulder, half to touch him and half to steady himself. He liked this look on Hannibal’s face; a mix of surprise and wonder. Without second guessing himself Will pressed his lips against Hannibal’s. In shock over Will’s action, Hannibal opened his mouth and Will, cocky and gleeful about what he had just pulled off, pushed his tongue inside.

Will’s body was too hurt and exhausted for serious arousal, but Hannibal reacted uncharacteristically compliantly and let Will plunder his mouth without reaching for him or taking control. It was hard for Will to stop kissing him. He wanted to bury himself in Hannibal. He made himself pull back and got to enjoy the happiness on Hannibal’s face.

Will straightened up and stepped back. He wanted to kiss Hannibal again, but he knew Jack was on his way and when fleeing the law, every minute counted.

“I will get my shoes,” he said and tried to step around Hannibal to the door, where his shoes normally resided. Hannibal caught his hand and they looked into each other’s eyes again.

“What changed your mind?” he asked and Will knew the question was caused by the fear of being hurt again. Answering with the truth was out of the question. At least, not with the whole truth.

“At Muskrat Farm,” he said. “I only had one thought, one force keeping me going. I wanted us to survive. When backed into a corner, I only wanted both of us to live and escape.”

He could see by Hannibal’s face that it wasn’t enough and continued, hoping what he fabricated would sound true.

“I don’t want to be without you. I don’t want to wake up at some point in the future and realize I haven’t spent every possible minute with you,” he leaned forward, looking into Hannibal’s eyes, “can we go now?”

Will had the feeling Hannibal wasn’t completely convinced, but he got up and let go of Will. He left Hannibal standing and went for his shoes. He was as nervous as hell. Not knowing if he could pull this off made him fearful. He tried to remember what was happening on the FBI’s side at the moment. Unfortunately, he hadn’t ever heard that side of the events. He could only guess, but guessing wasn’t knowing.

“My car is in the barn,” he said. “But we shouldn’t use it for long, they will look for it quickly.”

“I have a car available that’s not connected to us,” Hannibal said. Will looked up in surprise and found Hannibal watching him.

“You have?” he said and caught himself. “Good, that’s good. Shall we go?”

He needed to be careful with his reactions. Hannibal would become suspicious if Will knew stuff he couldn’t know yet.

“Do you wish to take anything with you?”

Will’s eyes went to the empty dog beds for a second before he shook his head.

“Your dogs?”, Hannibal asked. Will wondered what the question was about. Surely Hannibal wasn’t asking Will if he wanted to flee with him and his pack of seven dogs. He probably just wanted to check if Will had any doubts.

“They are fine,” Will answered and shook his head slightly. “They are with Alana and she…”

He remembered then meeting Alana at Muskrat Farm. He couldn’t know if she was alive.

“Is Alana okay?” he asked and cringed about the softness in his voice. Hannibal’s face didn’t show any hurt and Will could only hope he wasn’t worried about Will’s feelings for Alana due to his question.

“She was alive and well when we left Muskrat Farm,” Hannibal told him.

“Then she will look after my dogs,” Will said affirming. “They will be okay.”

He waited for Hannibal to move. It was worrisome that he wasn’t jumping at the chance to have Will.

“Do you want me to come with you?” Will asked after a few seconds of stillness. It was hard to understand Hannibal in this moment. The first time he had been here, he had rebuffed and manipulated Hannibal. He had never thought about what Hannibal’s intentions had been when he brought him here. Apart from the safe haven that Wolf Trap offered, if only for a while, it wasn’t a logical choice for him. Going to the cliff house or another hideout would have been better for Hannibal.

“Nothing would make me happier than seeing you every day for the rest of my life,” Hannibal answered and Will felt some relief. He smiled and it was like his smile broke the ice between them. Hannibal moved and got him a jacket. They left the house and Hannibal strode out in the direction of some trees. He was moving with a slight limp.

“Are you hurt?”

Hannibal fleetingly glanced over his shoulder before he answered.

“Jack injured my leg in Florence.”

But there was something else. Will vaguely remembered something about a brand. He wanted to ask more, but Hannibal had stopped beside a tree and looked up into the branches. Will

followed his gaze and was startled when Chiyoh looked down at them with a rifle in her hands.

“Will has decided to come with us,” Hannibal told her and she focused on Will. He made himself not flinch and look her straight in the eyes. Whatever she saw in his face, it seemed to be enough. She shouldered her rifle and climbed down the tree with ease. As battered and stiff as his own body was, Will could only watch her with envy.

They left and walked until they reached the car.

“Chiyoh picked us up when we left Muskrat Farm,” Hannibal explained as he saw Will eyeing the car. “We were fortunate that she found us in time.”

Will just nodded. He assumed Hannibal would sit in the front seat, but he joined Will in the back. Will noted some stiffness when Hannibal sat down.

“Are you hurt anywhere apart from your leg?” he asked as Chiyoh started the car. He had not been privy to all information from the events of Muskrat Farm, but he knew Hannibal had been in the hospital ward of the prison for a while.

“Some cuts and bruises and a burn wound on my back,” Hannibal answered without intonation and then spoke to Chiyoh in, what Will assumed was Japanese. She answered in the same language. Will listened to them with a frown. After a short conversation, she nodded and started to drive.

“Burn wound on your back?” Will asked after deciding not to comment on his exclusion. At the same time, he reached for Hannibal’s hand between them and took hold.

“Mason wished to give me the pigs’ experience,” Hannibal replied and looked curiously at their hands before he entwined their fingers. “Including a brand with the Verger seal.”

Fuck, Will thought.

“Is he dead?” he asked aloud.

“If Margot has not decided otherwise, he is.”

Will thought about that for a moment. He had always thought it might have been her. Hannibal had been pushing Margot to kill Mason for a long time.

“Do you want to lie down?” he asked Hannibal after considering the place of the wound. “It can’t be comfortable to lean against it.”

Hannibal looked over before he nodded. He took off the seatbelt and after some maneuvering done by both of them, he lay down. At first, it was awkward to have Hannibal’s head on Will’s lap, but slowly Will felt himself and Hannibal relax. He placed his hand on Hannibal’s head and couldn’t resist petting his hair. It was freshly washed and Will recognized the smell

of his own shampoo. The heating of the car was turned on and Will started to doze as his body warmed up. Hannibal was warm and relaxed under his hand.

Will startled out of sleep with an open mouth. He closed it with a loud clap and looked around. He was still in the car. They had stopped and it was dark outside, he couldn't see where they had ended up. Hannibal was lifting himself up from Will's lap. It was an unusual sight to see him with ruffled hair and little creases from sleeping pressed against Will's pants on his face.

"Where are we?" Will asked, but he knew without an answer when Chiyoh opened the driver's door and he heard the sea. They were back at the house at the cliff. All roads seemed to lead to it.

"It's a property I own," Hannibal answered and opened his own door. "We can rest here before we decide how to continue."

A little overwhelmed, Will nodded.

It was cold outside the car. Melting snow was on the ground and an icy drizzle was coming down on them. Will stumbled after Hannibal and Chiyoh through the dark. They were speaking in English this time. Hannibal told Chiyoh where the key was. Will stepped up to him, while Chiyoh opened the door, and touched Hannibal's shoulder gently. He was worried about his wounds. Lying in the car with a painful burn and a leg wound for hours couldn't have been good for him

They went inside. Will found himself following on Hannibal. He didn't want to let him out of sight. He thought he should feel foolish, but he didn't.

Hannibal gave him and Chiyoh a short tour of the house and offered both of them one of the bedrooms. After Chiyoh accepted one, Will asked: "Can we hide the car? I know nobody should be searching for it, but just to make sure?"

Hannibal's answering look was warm and appreciating.

"There is a camouflaged shelter a bit away from the house," he said.

"Good, I will take it there, okay?"

"I will accompany you," Chiyoh chimed in. It was the first time she had even addressed him. She probably wanted to keep an eye on him. Will didn't want her to come, but she wasn't wrong to not trust him. The last time she had seen him with Hannibal, he had tried to stab him with a knife and she had shot him. He hoped she wouldn't take the rifle.

The drive was silent. Will made sure to drive slowly, following Hannibal's directions, and kept looking out for the path. He didn't want to betray his knowledge of the area and make Chiyoh distrust him even more.

“I won’t try to kill him again,” he told her after they had hidden the car. They were walking side by side through the snow. She had, after all, taken her rifle with her and was holding it. She threw him a side-glance Will didn’t understand.

“I’m grateful you decided to come with him,” she answered slowly. “But I do not trust you with his life.”

“Okay,” Will said nodding. He got it. She didn’t know he wasn’t the same man she got to know less than two weeks ago.

Chiyoh stopped, Will came to a halt and turned to look at her. She seemed irritated and her grip on her weapon was tight instead of her usual relaxed stance.

“Before you woke up,” she said, sounding confused. “He asked me to watch over him. I believed he wanted to incarcerate himself to please you.”

Will blinked, that was new to him. He had thought his manipulations had made Hannibal decide to give himself up to the FBI. An act of defiance against Will’s action of pushing him away.

“He wanted to give up his freedom for your happiness.” *And my attention,* Will thought, frowning. Her words changed his perception of the past. He would have liked a moment to figure out what it meant for him, but Chiyoh continued speaking.

“And I will follow his wishes.”

He nodded again.

“I wouldn’t expect any less from you.”

She stared and seemed to come to a conclusion. Without further comment, she continued walking and Will had to hurry to catch up with her.

Hannibal was cooking in the kitchen when they came back. He smiled at Will and then Chiyoh when they came into the room. Will smiled back hesitantly. A moment later Chiyoh excused herself from the room and they were alone.

“What are your cooking?” Will asked at the same time as Hannibal asked: “Did you find the shelter?”

Will laughed. Making small talk wasn’t like them.

“The car is hidden, Chiyoh didn’t kill me,” he summarized and stepped closer to the counter where Hannibal was working.

“Stew?” he asked and Hannibal nodded.

“We have limited ingredients available,” Hannibal explained. “Would you like to refresh yourself? Dinner won’t be ready for another hour. I have clothes in your size in the room opposite the master bedroom.”

Will left and checked the bedroom as Hannibal had advised him to. He took a shower, trying hard not to get his wounds wet. Had Hannibal intended to get arrested, like Chiyoh assumed? It would mean he had predicted Will’s reaction and planned accordingly. And Will hadn’t realized it. Until now, he had believed Hannibal had gone to prison in a hissy fit to get his way and the attention he believed Will owed him. If he hadn’t, then it was a very elegant gesture and showed his willingness not to dominate their whole relationship and to submit to Will’s wishes instead of following his own agenda above everything else. The idea was seductive and sad at the same time. Sad because it meant Will had lost a chance in the original timeline to be with Hannibal, because he had misinterpreted him. Seductive, because maybe he could use that chance now.

After the shower, Will went to the other bedroom to get fresh clothes. The clothes he had worn on the day they killed the dragon were waiting for him. Deliberately, Will chose different ones. This wasn’t a repeat. It was a new experience. On his way back to the main room he stared briefly at the master bedroom. He wanted to sleep in there and wondered if Hannibal would let him. He had kissed Will back in Wolf Trap, but for Hannibal, at this point of their lives, Will’s advances must be out of character.

The table was set in the main room with three settings. Inwardly, Will sighed. Hannibal’s need for proper etiquette could be tiring. He would have preferred a quick bite and then rest. Hopefully nobody expected him to lead any conversation.

Chiyoh came into the room. Her clothes startled Will. It took him a moment to realize why; they were very obviously Abigail’s, even though Chiyoh wore them differently. Of course, Hannibal didn’t have clothes for her here. He wondered why she didn’t have her own stuff with her.

“Did you...,” he started before he could stop himself. She fixed her gaze on him, waiting. “How did you get to the States?”

“I used some unconventional means,” was her careful answer. Will nodded. He wondered if her rifle was new or if she had smuggled hers in the country. He didn’t ask, he didn’t want to overstep.

“I will see if Hannibal needs help in the kitchen,” he said instead and left.

Maroon eyes narrowed on him when Will entered the room.

“Can I carry something?” Will asked without giving Hannibal the chance to ask anything. He was filling their soup plates with the stew.

“If you could take the water, I would much appreciate it. I will be ready to serve in a moment.”

Shortly after, they sat together at the table and ate the stew. It was nice. Very likely it was the most basic meal Hannibal had ever served him apart from the soup he fed him to sweeten his brain. Will shuddered at the memory. That only happened one or two days ago from this Hannibal’s point of view.

“Is the stew not to your liking?” Hannibal asked.

“No,” Will answered slowly, trying to figure out what to say. “It’s good. I just remembered the last soup I had.”

To his surprise, Hannibal lowered his head as if chastised. Will quickly checked Chiyoh, who was watching Hannibal with a measuring look and decided not to continue the discussion.

“We will need supplies if we decide to stay here for a while, won’t we?”

“Yes,” Hannibal replied. “Chiyoh, would you go and gather some provisions tomorrow?”

“I can,” she said. “But you should know your Jack Crawford saw me in Florence.”

Hannibal focused on her.

“He told me how to find you,” she added carefully. “If he was able to leave Italy, he might look for me too.”

Will huffed.

“I’m assuming you left a lot of dead bodies on Muskrat Farm?” he asked Hannibal and received a nod in reply. “Then Jack is probably closer than we want him to be.”

“I will make arrangements for us to leave the country,” Hannibal said. “Most likely it will take some time. One shopping trip of Chiyoh’s should not bring undue attention.”

Will silently decided to cross out any luxury items on the shopping list. He didn’t want them to be caught. Not this time.

He helped Hannibal in the kitchen after the meal. Chiyoh had excused herself already. It seemed like she avoided them when possible. They worked in companionable silence. Will was washing the dishes and Hannibal was drying and clearing them away. He cleaned the sink when he was finished and watched Hannibal tidy up the last few items.

“Can I kiss you again?” he asked Hannibal’s back. Hannibal stilled for a moment and replied while turning: “You did not ask the first time.”

“Did I surprise you?” Will asked and his mind flashed back to the Hannibal he had left with Abigail and a dead Will. It made him feel guilty, but he pushed the thought away. He had another Hannibal to concentrate on right now.

“Until your kiss, I had not gotten the impression that you wished a relationship, let alone a sexual one.”

He couldn’t have, because at this point during his original life, sex with Hannibal hadn’t even been on Will’s mind. Sex didn’t seem to be essential for Hannibal. Killing was very much a must have, but not sex. He had let Will nearly die of encephalitis, got him imprisoned and tried to eat his brain, but he had never taken sexual advantages. If one didn’t count the times he had undressed and redressed Will while he was unconscious.

“I want a relationship; I want to be with you. I want sex, but if you don’t want it, that’s fine. It won’t make me leave.”

He knew how to use his hands after all and Hannibal probably would want sex; he had in Will’s first time jump, when they had been lovers.

“I want to be with you, too,” Hannibal said with a miniscule smile. He was leaning against the kitchen counter. “I would like to have you at my side for everything, but I want you to know, if you do not want to kill with me, that is fine as well.”

Will was surprised at the words, it was an offering he hadn’t thought Hannibal capable of. Part of him thought Hannibal was most likely thinking Will would want to kill at some point. But that was okay, it wouldn’t be them without a certain amount of manipulation. A healthy and open relationship theirs was not.

“We agree we want to be together then,” Will said smiling.

“And you can kiss me,” Hannibal added. Will moved before he could think it through. He stepped up to Hannibal, placed his hands on the counter behind him and leaned up to kiss. It was soft and gentle at first, they just moved their lips against each other. Will wanted more and he pushed Hannibal’s lips open. Kissing, Will could feel some teeth. He remembered these teeth ripping out living flesh and a shudder ran through him. He could barely stop himself from pressing a leg between Hannibal’s and bending him over the counter. With swollen lips, Will stepped back and stared at what he had done. Hannibal looked delectable. His lips were reddened and his pupils blown.

“I assume this means having sex won’t be a problem for you?”

“No,” Hannibal answered. He sounded a little off.

“I want to sleep in the master bedroom,” Will rushed to tell him.

“Of course,” Hannibal agreed. He stood up and straightened himself. “But we should both get some sleep now and take antibiotics.”

Led by Hannibal, they left the kitchen. Will still felt some arousal from the kiss and couldn't help but stare at Hannibal's back. He was bodily tired from the day and his injuries, and mentally from the time jumps and the revelations about Hannibal. Still, he wouldn't have minded some slow and lazy sex to take his mind off things.

Hannibal, it seemed, had other ideas. He handed out some still sealed antibiotics to Will, asked which side of the bed he preferred before he went to the bathroom to change. Will took the antibiotics and changed into sleepwear in the second bedroom. Hannibal was in the bed when he was finished and Will went to brush his teeth.

When he came back into the room he slipped under the covers on the other side. They were both facing each other. Will felt worried and it took him a little while to get that he was picking it up from Hannibal. Maybe he had really planned to get arrested and to not see Will for a long time. Will reached out and touched his face. Hannibal relaxed under the touch and Will moved closer to him. They arranged themselves until their legs were entwined and Hannibal was lying half on Will. He was heavy, but Will didn't mind. He fell asleep to Hannibal's breath hitting the bare skin of his throat rhythmically.

Will woke up and could hear the sea in the distance. They had fallen, he remembered. He felt and smelt Hannibal beside him. They must have survived, he thought. But as awareness took over, Will remembered dying again and again. He knew he was somewhere before the fall and he did have a Hannibal beside him. Will opened his eyes, turned his head to the side and found Hannibal sleeping. His head was leaning against Will's shoulder. He must have been more tired and hurt than Will had thought if he didn't wake up from Will's movements. A glance over Hannibal to the window showed him it was nearly dawn.

Will decided to stay for a moment. He hadn't slept that long and felt no urge to get up. His head hurt a little, but that was to be expected. With the memory of his fall so present, he wondered what he would do here and now. This Hannibal was very close to his Hannibal. Only years of imprisonment and the dragon divided the two. Prison hadn't seemed to have changed Hannibal as far as Will remembered. But of course, he had tried his best not to get too close when he visited Hannibal in the BSHCI. He had thought he knew everything and that he had won when he manipulated Hannibal into giving himself up.

He looked down at Hannibal's head and face and felt himself soften. He wanted him, even knowing he wasn't exactly like the future Hannibal. Maybe, whoever and whatever was moving him through time wanted Will to feel like Hannibal had when they met. Since his first time jump, Will had tried most of the tricks Hannibal had played in their relationship. He had manipulated and pulled and pushed to get what he wanted. He had even ended his own life in the last jump to gain an advantage. Now he felt resigned.

Will remembered worrying about being depressed from one of the last timelines. He probably was a little. Knowing anything he did here would have no effect on the final outcome took something away from this here and now. He could give this Hannibal up and die again. It would, most likely, bring him even closer to the cliff. If he could make it there and not pull them over, he would have his Hannibal and be alive. But being able to influence the direction

in which he travelled through time was one thing. Knowing how to make it to a certain point was above his knowledge. With his luck, he would end up in free fall and it would be a final ending with no more time travel and second chances.

Better to stay here, Will decided and looked at Hannibal again. Watching eyes met his and Will startled. He hadn't felt any change in Hannibal's body.

"Good morning," he said to hide his surprise.

"Good Morning, Will," greeted Hannibal. His voice was rough from sleep. "What were you thinking about?"

"You, me, where we have been and where we will go."

Hannibal blinked, obviously still a little slow from sleep, before he answered.

"Do you have a preference of where you would like to live?" he asked.

Will didn't know how to answer that.

"Somewhere quiet?", he said after some consideration. "Where we can just be together on our own for a while?"

"Of course," Hannibal agreed. He started to stretch his body, Will heard a vertebrae pop and frowned.

"How are you feeling?"

"None of my injuries feel like they have worsened," was Hannibal's answer. Will still worried as he watched the man sit up slowly. After he had swung his legs out of the bed and sat up the edge, Hannibal looked back to Will.

"How are *you* feeling?"

Will shrugged.

"My head hurts and most of my body is sore or strained, but otherwise okay."

"May I check your head wound later?"

Will hesitated and touched the bandage on his forehead. The memory of the bone saw came back in full force.

"I can advise you on how to take care of it if you prefer," Hannibal offered.

"No," Will said. "No, you can do it."

He tried to sound convincing, but he didn't think he succeeded.

“Will you be able to forgive me?” Hannibal asked. He first looked at Will’s forehead and then in his eyes. “For hurting you and taking Abigail.”

Hearing her name from Hannibal’s lips still hurt.

“Can you stop hurting me?” Will asked. So much more had happened to Will than this Hannibal knew. He had forgiven him for Abigail and taken his vengeance too. But he couldn’t deal with being betrayed and hurt anymore.

Hannibal didn’t answer him immediately. It gave Will hope the answer wouldn’t be a lie.

“I want to try,” Hannibal finally said. “But…”

Will had never seen Hannibal at a loss for words. He sat up and put his hand on Hannibal’s shoulder.

“How about, the next time you feel the urge to eat me, I offer you a different part of me to consume,” Will said. He had wanted to sound suggestive, but it felt more cringeworthy, so he concluded in a deflated voice: “Consume me in a sexier way.”

Hannibal laughed and Will wasn’t sure if he was affronted or relieved. But when he saw Hannibal’s face, relief won. He smiled sheepishly as Hannibal crawled back on the bed and pressed a kiss on Will’s lips.

“Yes,” Hannibal said no longer laughing, but with mirth in his eyes.

Will frowned, he didn’t understand.

“Yes, I would very much like to consume you,” Hannibal said. “Right now.”

Will flushed as he realised and closed his eyes in a short bout of embarrassment.

“May I?” Hannibal asked and Will nodded, speechless.

Without waiting for further confirmation, Hannibal placed his hand against Will’s chest and pressed him back onto the mattress. Will remembered Hannibal’s wounded leg at that point and started to help by undressing himself. Hannibal seemed to have a vision and Will let himself be arranged as the other pleased. Soon he was lying naked on the bed, his cock was half-hard, he had a pillow under his butt and Hannibal had arranged himself between Will’s legs, with a pillow under his own bandaged leg.

“Feel free to hold onto me and dictate the speed,” was all Hannibal said before he swallowed him down. Will groaned as the wet heat of Hannibal’s mouth engulfed him.

“Fuck,” he groaned as Hannibal started to move way too fast. He reached for Hannibal and grabbed his hair tight between his fingers, slowing him down so he could enjoy the warmth and the pressure. The sight of Hannibal pleasuring him with closed eyes was overwhelming.

He looked as pliant and soft as his mouth felt and Will reveled in the feeling of control he had right now.

Will moved Hannibal's head a little faster and felt a scrape of teeth. He moaned and his legs twitched. Hannibal's eyes opened and he met Will's gaze. While they were staring at each other, Hannibal tightened his mouth a little and Will felt teeth again. He lost it and just rammed his cock into Hannibal's mouth until he felt his throat. There was a gagging noise, but Will didn't care. Hannibal could easily overpower him if necessary. He fucked Hannibal's mouth. The speed of his movements picked up as he came closer to orgasm. Hannibal's mouth tightened again and he moaned around Will's cock before his whole body shuddered between Will's legs. His mouth became slack again and as Will realized Hannibal had come, it pushed him over as well.

Will felt dazed for a while. He felt Hannibal swallow repeatedly around him. A hand was stroking over Will's hip and then over the sensitive skin around his stomach scar.

"Fuck," Will said between greedy breaths for air. Hannibal released him from his mouth and Will remembered to finally let go of Hannibal's hair.

Will closed his eyes. He felt shattered and he knew he would fall asleep if he didn't get up.

"Thank you," he said groggily as his breath slowed down. Hannibal moved up and the taste of his own release was invading his mouth as Hannibal kissed him. Will let it happen without opening his eyes.

"Sleep, Will," Hannibal said and pressed a kiss on each of his eyes. "I will wake you soon."

Chapter End Notes

Did anyone register the "Quantum Leap" reference? XD

Season 3 Episode 13 "The Wrath of the Lamb" BACKWARD to

Pre-Season 1 Episode 1 FOWARD to
Season 1 Episode 11 "Rôti" BACKWARD to
Season 1 Episode 6 "Coquilles" FORWARD to

Season 1 Episode 13 "Savoureux" FORWARD to
Season 2 Episode 7 "Yakimono" FORWARD to
Season 2 Episode 13 "Mizumono" FORWARD to

Season 3 Episode 7 "Digestivo"

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

After the events of "We Killed a Dragon Last Night" Will found himself moving around in time. Will figured out how to manipulate the rules and jump forward in time, hoping to get closer to his Hannibal.
But he is tired from all the time jumps and has run off with Hannibal after escaping from Muskrat farm.

Chapter Notes

Blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc. Have fun, let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

I'm very grateful for my wonderful beta readers: emptyheart, NiaKantorka, Gwilbers and Cathy_Kitty_Pretty.
Thank you so much for all your help! All remaining errors are mine.

Please check out the wonderful gif Sirenja <3 made for the fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will felt relaxed and warm when he opened his eyes. The sun was shining through the windows and the sheets pooled around his legs. He blinked slowly until he had gotten used to the brightness. His mind was quiet and for the first time since forever, he wasn't confused about where or when he was. This was after Muskrat Farm and the Hannibal of this timeline had blown him before he fell asleep. Or, better, had blown him so he would fall asleep. He wondered if any surprises were waiting for him. Stretching sensually, Will decided he didn't care right now.

He got up and considered looking for Hannibal just draped in a blanket, but there was a chance of running into Chiyoh. As much as Hannibal would hopefully appreciate the sight, Chiyoh wouldn't, and he didn't want to make the situation with her even more complicated. Instead, he put on pants, a shirt and a long-sleeved blue sweater, and went into the bathroom to freshen up. He found Hannibal outside, sitting on the wooden table there. His back was to the house, papers on the table and a mobile phone to his ear.

Will wanted to join him, but he was hungry and Hannibal looked busy. He went to the kitchen and found coffee, bread rolls that were still warm, and some spreads. He made himself a plate of food and took it with a cup of coffee to Hannibal. It was chilly outside, but

Hannibal smiled when Will sat down opposite him. He continued to speak in French with whoever was on the phone. Will understood a word or two here and there, but couldn't guess at what was being discussed.

When Hannibal hung up, Will had already demolished the bread rolls and was working on the coffee.

"Hello, Will," Hannibal said smiling as he put the phone down.

"Hannibal," Will said slowly and smiled. He liked saying it. "How are your wounds?"

"Chiyoh helped me take care of them before she left, thank you for asking."

Will nodded and sipped his coffee. It was good, but he still didn't understand why the fancy machine was necessary.

"Will you let me check your wounds later?" Hannibal asked.

"Sure," Will replied. He had already agreed to that earlier on.

"Are you working on getting us out of the country?" he asked, nodding at Hannibal's phone on the table.

"I'm in the process of making arrangements," Hannibal ominously replied. His gaze met Will's. "Are you still planning to come with me?"

Will frowned. Hannibal had seemed to be okay with them staying together earlier. Why was he questioning him now?

"Of course," he said and reached out to place his hand on Hannibal's across the table. "Do you think I will change my mind?"

Hannibal looked at the hand and then back to Will.

"You came to me with a knife in Florence."

Will's first instinct was to pull his hand away. He wasn't sure where this came from, if he had to guess, he thought Chiyoh might have had a talk with Hannibal.

"And you tried to cut my skull open and eat my brain for that. I don't want to kill you and I hope you don't want to eat me anymore. Do we really need to have this conversation again?" he asked impatiently.

"I believe we do," Hannibal said calmly. "Right now, you could still return to your old life without any major repercussions."

He couldn't, of course. His old life was in the future and getting it back wasn't possible. Will suppressed a sigh. He wasn't sure what Hannibal needed to hear at this point.

“I don’t want to,” Will said. “I wanted to run away with you before you killed Abigail. I want to run away with you now.”

Hannibal placed his other hand over Will’s and tilted his head.

“You are different.”

“Am I?” Will asked. Of course he was, but he couldn’t explain years of extra experiences thanks to time travel to Hannibal. He had seen what a knowing Hannibal would bring him. The words of that Hannibal about not being able to share Will even with himself were still echoing in his mind.

“I made a decision, Hannibal. I want to see you every day for the rest of my life, okay?”

He gripped Hannibal’s hand under his and pulled it to his mouth before he placed a kiss on the back of it.

“There have been many manipulations and pain between us, but I want to move forward.”

Hannibal nodded.

“I want to move forward too,” he said to Will and took his hand back to his side of the table. “Shall we go inside? Your lips are cold and I would like to check your wounds.”

Will went to the kitchen and left his plate and mug while Hannibal got what they needed. When he came back into the main room Hannibal was at the table. He checked Will’s cuts and bruises and put new dressings on them.

“The cut from the saw is slightly swollen, but that was to be expected. It will most likely take a while for the bone to knit itself together. When the skin has closed, we can use vitamin E to reduce the scarring.”

Will nodded, he wasn’t worried. The wound and the bone had both healed well the last time.

“What do we do now?” Will asked as Hannibal was putting the medical supplies away.

“Rest and heal,” Hannibal suggested. “In a few days, we will very likely leave and will have to travel quickly.”

“I meant right now,” Will said smiling. Hannibal looked up to him and Will could see a soft smile emerge.

“I should lie down for a while,” Hannibal said. Will frowned slightly.

“I thought you were okay?”

“I am, but rest is needed,” Hannibal said. “Would you like to join me?”

They left for the bedroom and Will watched as Hannibal undressed to his underwear and laid down on the bed. His movements seemed stiff and Will was reminded of the injuries the wound dressings hid.

“Can I help you?” he asked and followed Hannibal’s instructions of pillow and blanket placements. Soon the man was propped up by pillows, lying half on his side, his arms and legs covered by blankets, only his head and his back were left to the open. Will found that he looked oddly endearing. He sat down beside him and placed his hand on top of Hannibal’s head. His hair was silky and Will wanted to play with it.

“Chiyoh is getting special dressings for the brand.”

“Are you in pain?” Will asked. It seemed like it. He couldn’t imagine Hannibal showing so much vulnerability otherwise.

“I have taken painkillers,” Hannibal said.

“But not strong ones,” Will guessed. “You don’t want to be to out of it if you need to react quickly should we get into trouble.”

Hannibal didn’t answer and Will took it as confirmation. Sighing, he followed his urge and started to play with Hannibal’s hair. As hoped, Hannibal relaxed quickly under Will’s touch. Will watched with a smile as Hannibal closed his eyes and his breath evened out.

“You’re not asleep,” he whispered accusingly and saw the corners of Hannibal’s mouth curl slightly upwards. Will huffed, amused.

“Lie down, Will.”

After considering it for a moment, Will did. He had to scuffle around so he could still touch Hannibal with the pillows between them. He wasn’t tired and he knew Hannibal wasn’t sleeping. Although he felt no need to fill the silence between them, he thought this might be a good moment to ask Hannibal something.

“Yesterday,” Will started and licked his lips. “Chiyoh told me… she told me, she believed you wanted to give yourself up to the FBI. Did you?”

“I considered it,” Hannibal said after a long moment of silence. He opened his eyes and watched Will.

“It seemed like the only way to stay close to you.”

Will sighed.

“You are always so melodramatic,” he said not really complaining. “Why not just kidnap me like you did with Miriam?”

“Right now, or when we first met?” Hannibal asked sounding honestly curious.

“Both times.”

“I thought about it when we met, but watching you in your natural environment, while the encephalitis transformed your brain was too tempting. And now, now I could not bear to see your wings clipped. Would you have liked me to kidnap you?”

“Now? No,” Will said. “But in retrospect it would have been easier if you had after our first meeting. Much less suffering for so many people.”

Will wondered if it was something Hannibal would try if he were in his position, time traveling through his own timeline. It was a scary thought, Hannibal time traveling and having an even bigger advantage over Will.

“You always place the well-being of others over your own,” Hannibal said thoughtfully.

“Not always, but I feel the pain and joy of others like it’s my own, Hannibal.”

“Unless you isolate yourself.”

Will wanted to reject that, but it wasn’t untrue.

“Yes,” he finally said.

“Jack made you come out of your chosen loneliness and it made you vulnerable.”

“Not Jack,” Will disagreed, his words felt bitter coming out. “Or at least not just Jack.”

Hannibal didn’t pry, but Will felt the old wounds break open with Hannibal at his side. The last few time jumps and having encephalitis again, even dying from it, had brought the hurt up again.

“I trusted you,” he said. He wanted to get up and put distance between them, but that wasn’t an option anymore. “You were my paddle. But you let me drown.”

“And I know,” he continued before Hannibal could speak. “I know I hurt you too.”

Will stopped touching Hannibal and pressed his fists against his eyes as he felt the old pain.

“I love you for the pain you feel right now,” Hannibal said.

“Because you are a damn sadist!” Will said accusingly, but without opening his eyes or taking away his hands.

“Your pain shines light on your humanity. It makes you beautiful.”

Will let his arms drop and looked at Hannibal. The man meant what he had just said.

“If you keep hurting me, I won’t be able to get up at some point, Hannibal.”

“I don’t wish to cause you trauma anymore,” Hannibal assured. Will wanted to believe him, but he remembered Hannibal sending the dragon after Molly.

“As long as I’m with you.”

Hannibal didn’t answer immediately. He seemed to think, sighed and said: “Yes, as long as you are with me. But I am sorry for the condition.”

“At least you are honest,” Will said tiredly. “It’s better to state the rules and the lines we don’t want to cross. Better than getting eaten, you know.”

Hannibal nodded and Will couldn’t find the strength the continue their talk. He felt drained from the little they had discussed, but also cleansed. He lay down beside Hannibal and held his hand.

He startled out of sleep when Hannibal moved beside him and blinked, disoriented. The light hadn’t changed much, he couldn’t have slept long.

“I believe Chiyoh has returned,” Hannibal said while getting up. “You can stay in…”

“No,” Will interrupted him. “I’ll come. You shouldn’t lift anything with your injuries.”

It was Chiyoh. She had brought groceries and what seemed like half of the inventory of a hospital. They carried everything inside while Hannibal stored the food away. Will took the new medical supplies to the bathroom. When Hannibal was finished in the kitchen, he asked Will to help him change his dressings.

Following Hannibal’s instructions, Will cleaned the wound. He hadn’t seen the brand before and it made him angry to see it now. The urge to claw it off was strong. Mason Verger was lucky he was already dead.

“It feels hot around the brand,” Will said as he gently checked the corners with his gloved fingers.

“It might be the healing process or an infection. The antibiotics should take care of it if it’s the latter.”

“I know you are a doctor, but I would feel better if a doctor had a look at it,” Will said and placed the gel dressing on top of the cleaned wound. Hannibal took a barely audible sharp intake of breath.

“After we have left the country, I can find a medical professional,” Hannibal agreed. He held his arms out as Will taped the dressing down. When Will was finished, he leaned forward and

pressed a kiss against the undamaged skin on Hannibal's back before he leaned his forehead against it. The wound behind his own dressing hurt at the pressure.

"Please do," he said. "It looks horrible, and if it were possible, I would go and kill Mason Verger again."

Hannibal turned a little and focused sharply on Will before he asked: "Would you like to have sex?"

"Um," Will said surprised and ran a hand through his hair. "Yes, but… we don't have to. Just… after seeing your wound, I'm not sure we should. And shouldn't we check the injury on your leg too?"

"There are positions which shouldn't put too much strain on me. You will have to do the majority of the work," Hannibal said nonchalantly. Will felt flushed at the words. It was hot having Hannibal proposition him, but also weird.

"Maybe after lunch?" Hannibal asked while he watched Will's face. "We have little to do otherwise."

"Okay?" Will answered and coughed. It was stupid to feel embarrassed. He had already had sex with Hannibal in the other timelines. Especially in the first timeline after the fall. But his relationship with the other Hannibal had been more playful and less urgent. Maybe this Hannibal needed sex as an affirmation of Will being willing to stay with him. Will took a breath and repeated with a stronger voice: "Okay, after lunch."

Will regretted agreeing to the timetable very soon. Waiting was agony. He knew he would be able to touch Hannibal soon, but time had slowed down to a crawl now. Hannibal was no help. He took his time cooking, leisurely serving the food and engaging Chiyoh and Will in an inane discussion about hunting vs. fishing. Given that Will didn't want to get into any disagreements with Chiyoh, he tried to stay as neutral as possible. The whole thing completely bewildered Chiyoh. Hannibal, on the other hand, seemed very amused. Will wanted to be angry with him, but he couldn't help but be as charmed by it as he was frustrated.

"That wasn't funny, Hannibal," he said when they got into the bedroom. They had told Chiyoh they were taking a nap. Will doubted that she believed it.

"I was very amused," Hannibal answered dryly.

Will huffed. Hannibal being this carefree was unusual, but in a nice way.

"Would you like to have sex now, Will?"

Frowning, Will watched Hannibal as he sat down on the edge of the bed.

“You are not…,” he tried to find a polite way to say it. “You don’t feel obligated to sleep with me, do you?”

“No,” was Hannibal’s quick answer. “I enjoy being intimate with you.”

He was as calm as Will felt nervous as he spoke.

“Okay,” Will said with relief. “What position did you have in mind?”

“It will be easier to show you,” Hannibal said and started to undress.

“Would you get the lube, condoms and a towel from the bathroom, Will? You will find them in the mirror cabinet.”

Reluctantly - Hannibal’s undressing wasn’t exactly a striptease, but still very nice to watch - Will followed his request. When he came back to the bedroom he found Hannibal sitting naked on the foot end of the bed.

Hannibal pointed beside himself to the bed and Will placed the supplies he had gotten beside him on the mattress. Still smiling, Hannibal took Will’s hands and placed them on his own shoulders, bringing their faces close to each other. Will leaned in to kiss him. Hannibal’s lips parted for him and Will closed his eyes to savor the touch and taste. It was nice to have Hannibal and being able to touch him. But soon kissing wasn’t enough. Will grabbed Hannibal’s hair with one hand, pulled him backwards and proceeded to kiss and bite downwards on Hannibal’s throat.

“As much as I would like you to press me into the bed,” Hannibal said a little breathless. “I had something else in mind.”

Will let him go and watched as Hannibal crawled onto the bed, he started to arrange the pillows and Will hurried to help him. Soon Hannibal was laying on his stomach on the edge of the bed; his butt was slightly raised by a pillow under it, his legs were on the ground, the injured leg protected by another pillow. Will was kneeling between his legs and was suddenly very aware how naked Hannibal was while he himself was fully clothed. He took a deep breath to calm himself.

“Do you like seeing me like this?” Hannibal asked and looked over his shoulder at Will.

“Yes,” Will said. He could be shameless in his wants and needs with Hannibal. There would be no judgement.

He leaned forward and kissed one of Hannibal’s ass cheeks. It felt uneven so he placed a second kiss on the other side. He put his hands on Hannibal’s calves and stroked over the long legs. Hannibal had wonderful legs, thin but muscled, lean meat. Will wanted to fuck him with those legs hooked around him. Maybe when Hannibal was healed. For now, he would be gentle. He stroked and petted and licked and kissed up Hannibal’s legs. When he reached Hannibal’s hips, Will realized he was still very much dressed. The memory of being naked on Hannibal’s table, while Hannibal pressed him down fully dressed in one of his suits, came up.

Later, Will thought and started to take off his clothes. *When Hannibal was healed, there would be time.*

Undressed and hard, Will leaned over Hannibal and pressed his cock between the cheeks of his ass. Hannibal quivered under him.

“Have you done this before?” Will asked. Bottoming didn’t completely fit with the image Hannibal projected. But on the other hand, Will knew Hannibal was a hedonist in his core and getting cared for was nice.

“I have,” Hannibal answered. “Should I ask if you have too?”

“Not my first rodeo,” Will murmured and felt Hannibal stiffen under him.

Will kissed the uninjured part of Hannibal’s back.

“I’m with you now,” he promised. Stating that he belonged to Hannibal might have worked better, but he couldn’t bring himself to say the words. He wasn’t this Hannibal’s Will after all. He had just stolen his place.

He nibbled his way up to Hannibal’s neck. After kissing and gently biting him there, he pulled him up a little to see his face. He looked really out of it and Will felt powerful and guilty at the same time. He was pretending to be someone he no longer was, but it was all this Hannibal would get, now that this Will was here.

“I will make it good for you,” Will promised and took the lube. He kneeled on the ground between Hannibal’s legs and started preparations. He had worried it wouldn’t be erotic, but hearing Hannibal’s breath speed up and the little gasps he made when Will massaged his prostate was sexy as hell. Soon, Will lost himself in the rhythm he fingered Hannibal with. He had to make this good for Hannibal.

“That’s enough,” Hannibal finally said with a rough voice. Will blinked, becoming aware of more than his fingers and the hot heat around them. He wiped his fingers on the towel and grabbed the condom. He was already hard and it took two attempts to put the condom on because he was too eager.

“You still okay?” Will asked as he kneeled behind Hannibal and gently touched the skin beside the dressing on Hannibal’s back.

“Very much so,” Hannibal answered.

Will wanted to push in slowly, but Hannibal had other plans and pushed back against him. He slipped in with ease and groaned.

“You are so tight.”

Hannibal didn’t respond verbally but tightened further around him. Will pressed his teeth and

lips together in an effort not to curse him. Of course, Hannibal would be a pushy bottom. But this was not the time to argue. He started to fuck into Hannibal, making himself go as slowly as he could. Hannibal tried to speed him up, but Will held his hips still with his hands until Hannibal stopped.

“That’s it,” Will whispered. “I have you. Let me do this for you.”

And Hannibal let him. He was flat on the bed, soft and pliant and Will could hear little moans of pleasure escaping him. Gently, he moved his hands from Hannibal’s hips to his back and stroked over the skin. His thrusts were faster now, his own arousal was rising and he loved having Hannibal under him. The only thing he didn’t like was not being able to fully see his face. *When the gunshot was healed*, Will thought in a daze, *they had to do this again with Hannibal on his back*.

Will felt himself getting closer and he reached for Hannibal’s cock, which hung hard between his legs. Will stroked him, keeping the rhythm as he fucked into him. A sharp inhale from Hannibal was the only warning Will got before Hannibal came all over Will's hand. Will slowed down, not quite ready himself and kissed Hannibal’s back while he stroked him through the aftershocks.

“Can I keep going?” Will asked breathless when Hannibal had calmed down. It was hard to not just keep fucking into him.

“Yes, please,” Hannibal said and looked over his shoulder. He looked debauched and Will thought it was a good look on him. Will started to thrust again. Hannibal was softer now, more relaxed and only knowing Hannibal was hurt kept Will from letting himself go completely.

The wound, Will thought, trying to relax and to let go. But with a cold feeling of dread Will realized he had just thought of it as the gunshot wound. Will’s movements faltered in shock. His arousal sank and he felt embarrassed at his mistake. Hannibal had a burn wound; this wasn’t after the cliff fall, this was after Muskrat Farm and…

“What’s wrong?” Hannibal asked, looking back again. He seemed worried and Will felt so bad for his mix-up, it made him even less interested in continuing.

“Sorry,” Will said and pulled out. He was losing his erection as he slumped on the floor. Hannibal got off the bed and sat down beside him. Will couldn’t look at him; he was ashamed.

“There is no need to apologize,” Hannibal said. He took Will’s face in his hands and made Will look at him. “I was very satisfied. May I ask what stressed you?”

Will still couldn’t look at him, but he pressed his face in Hannibal’s right hand, eager for comfort he didn’t deserve. Hoping Hannibal wouldn’t hear, see or smell his lie he said: “I thought about your wound and about the hurt we have dealt out to each other. Sorry.”

Hannibal sighed, but to Will’s surprise, he didn’t try to engage him in an analysis of his

reaction.

“Will you lie down with me?” he asked instead, and Will nodded, glad he didn’t want to discuss the issue. He helped Hannibal up and onto the bed. Will took the condom off and went into the bathroom to clean up. For a long moment, he stared at himself in the mirror. He was ashamed for mixing up his Hannibal with the one he was with now. Will slunk back to the bedroom with a towel to clean Hannibal up.

“There is nothing to be ashamed of, Will,” Hannibal said as Will took care of the excess lube and Hannibal’s semen.

“I know,” Will lied again. “Intellectually.”

He dropped the towel beside the bed and curled up beside Hannibal, who petted his hair and neck soothingly. He hoped he would fall asleep, but it was Hannibal whose movement slowed and fell asleep while Will stayed wide awake in his own misery. It was weird to see Hannibal like that, trusting Will enough to sleep beside him. And Will was lying to him. He was an imposter. It felt wrong. He snuck out of bed, picked up his clothes and silently left the room. He was expecting Hannibal to wake up and was surprised when it didn’t happen.

Chiyoh wasn’t in the main room. Will was relieved not to see her, but also frustrated. He wanted to leave the house for a little while, but leaving Hannibal alone and unprotected was not an option. Compromising, Will went out to the patio. Without thinking about it, he walked up to the cliff’s edge.

I’m fucking this up, Will thought. The feeling of dread was overwhelming. He wanted this, but it seemed that part of him couldn’t forget this was not his world and this was not his Hannibal. He hadn’t thought it would be an issue. He had been fine with it in his first timeline after the cliff fall. But he hadn’t known then that he was on this endless journey through his own life, always hanging between deaths. Maybe this wasn’t even time travel, maybe he was dying in the water down there and his life was flashing in front of his eyes as he died in an episodic format.

Will shook his head. No, that wasn’t what was happening. It couldn’t be. This life was too real for it just to be a hallucination. He hugged himself and looked at the horizon. The question was if he could do this. Stay with this Hannibal and pretend to be his Will. The Will that had died with his arrival. He couldn’t undo being here, but he could be here for this Hannibal, right? He stood in the wind for a long time, unsure of what he should do.

When his fingers where cold and he had started to shake, Will went back inside. Chiyoh was sitting at the table in the main room. He wondered if she had watched him and what she was thinking as he came in and saw her. He nodded shortly to her, but only got a silent stare as an answer.

Will went to the kitchen, made himself some hot tea, and because he didn’t want to stay in the kitchen nor did he want to drink his tea with Chiyoh staring at him, he walked through the main room back to the bedroom. Hannibal was still sleeping and didn’t wake up when Will

came in the room and sat down on the bed. He must have taken some painkillers, Will realized, otherwise he would have long since woken up. It would also explain why he had fallen asleep so easily.

He stayed in bed, listening to Hannibal breathe and watching the cloudy sky through the window. Slowly, Will sipped his tea and tried not to think. He tried to just be there and enjoy having Hannibal, a Hannibal who had offered not to kill, for himself. But his mind went back to his own situation. He could have this and enjoy life with this Hannibal. He just had to forget his other life. And when the end came closer, he could end this life and be back in the past. An eternity of possibilities he could spend with Hannibal. Of course, it would never be a Hannibal that shared all his experiences. But over time, he might be able to forget. If he lived different pasts long enough, he might eventually forget. The thought was depressing. There were endless possibilities, but he didn't want to get to the stage where he felt so jaded that nothing mattered anymore.

Will didn't want life to lose its meaning, and he didn't want to forget his Hannibal. His heart hurt for all the Hannibals he had met and whose Will he had taken from them, but he suddenly understood that he wanted his own Hannibal back. Even if it was just for the fall and death in the water. The realization was painful and it made him feel even guiltier. He looked at the Hannibal beside him and his heart hurt. If he did choose this path, there would be no happy ending for this Hannibal or himself either.

Hannibal started to stir beside Will. He watched the movements, guilt-ridden. He didn't know what he would do with his newfound realization, but he knew he needed to give this Hannibal as much happiness as he could until their time was over.

"Hey," he greeted Hannibal, who looked up with half-closed eyes and sleep-tousled hair.

"Hello Will," Hannibal answered with a voice rough from sleep but with a small smile.

"So," Will began, "how strong was the painkiller you took?"

Hannibal slowly turned on his side so he could look at Will better.

"Strong enough that you needn't have worried about hurting me."

Will sighed.

"Please tell me next time?" he asked and Hannibal nodded after a moment.

"Thanks," Will said gratefully.

"Are you feeling better?" Hannibal asked.

Will shrugged.

"I'm still fretting a little, but I will get over it," he lied and leaned in to kiss Hannibal's forehead. The smile he got in return was glorious.

He stayed with Hannibal for the remainder of the day and helped him cook their evening meal. There was no teasing during dinner. They discussed more practical matters. To Will's surprise, Hannibal told them that he had a boat close by which was equipped for a quick getaway.

"We will have to check its status," he added thoughtfully and looked to Will. "Will you help me with that tomorrow?"

"Sure," Will answered.

"May I come too?" Chiyoh asked.

"If you don't mind, I have another task for you tomorrow," Hannibal declined her request.

"I sailed to Europe on a boat," Will told Hannibal as they got ready to go to bed. Hannibal's eyebrows rose.

"Why not take a plane?" he asked and Will rubbed his neck with one hand in embarrassment.

"I wasn't sure they would let me out of the country, for one," he answered. "Also… a flight would have been easily trackable. I didn't want anyone to track me and find you."

"Because I was your prey?"

"Yeah," Will said flushing.

Hannibal smiled, amused. Later, when they were in bed, lying side by side, he pulled Will close and they kissed for a long time. Will half expected the kissing to be foreplay, but Hannibal made no further moves, and in the end, they fell asleep facing each other, breathing each other's air.

As the day before, Hannibal was already up when Will woke, and Chiyoh was gone. After a leisurely breakfast, they went for a walk to check on the boat. It was halfway towards the lighthouse Will had visited in a previous loop. He had seen the paths down the cliff then, but hadn't explored them.

"I believe it would be better if I stayed up here," Hannibal said as Will checked the path.

"Your leg?" he asked and Hannibal nodded.

"When you reach the bottom, walk back in the direction of the house, after a few minutes you will find a flooded cave. The boat is moored inside."

He gave Will the small backpack he had carried. Will opened it and found a flashlight and a

grapple hook in it.

“You’ll be okay up here?” he asked.

“I will wait while you do all the work,” Hannibal answered. “Do not worry about me, Will.”

The path was steep. Will wondered if he could have taken it wounded, possibly with a shot Hannibal. It was an idle thought. He didn’t think he would be able to. Even unhurt it took all his concentration not to stumble.

He looked up when he reached the bottom and could barely make out Hannibal, who was watching him. He waved quickly. There was no path down here, just stones and more stones; he had to climb over them until he reached the cave. Will took out the flashlight as he entered over the stones. More than once he slipped and his shoes and trousers got soaked in salt water. The boat was anchored in the middle of the cave and Will needed the grapple hook to get on it. He got even wetter as he did it.

With the flashlight as his only source of light, it took Will a long time to check everything. What he could check seemed fine; there were plenty of supplies and nothing had spoiled. As with the path, Will couldn’t help but wonder if they could make it here if they had survived the fall. But they hadn’t; at least one of them had died and Will had traveled back in time because of it.

When he was nearly done, Will went back to the cabin and sat down on the floor. The boat moved in a gentle up and down motion with the soft waves in the cave. Will closed his eyes and took a few measured breaths. While he had some privacy at the house, with Hannibal near it was hard to have real privacy.

Will had doubts and he wasn’t sure how to handle them. He had wanted to stay here with this Hannibal. The mix-up he’d made during sex made him worry though. He wasn’t sure if he could really give himself one hundred percent to a relationship with this Hannibal if he couldn’t even keep it together when they had sex. He needed to think this through and he knew someone who could help him with that. With still closed eyes, Will imagined Hannibal, *his* Hannibal from the fight with the dragon. As he opened his eyes, Will found Hannibal sitting opposite him on the floor. His gunshot wound was bleeding and his face was pale. Will’s first instinct was to jump up and help, but he was just a hallucination.

“Hey,” Will said and watched Hannibal breathe visibly in and out.

“Hello Will,” he answered. “We haven’t spoken in a while.”

“Yeah,” Will said. Weirdly, he felt chastised by his own hallucination. “When I was with the other Hannibal, it didn’t seem prudent to have you there too. And the last few…”, Will hesitated as he wasn’t sure how much time had passed between the time jumps he had experienced, “weeks… well, they have been busy.”

“But now you call on me in your hour of need,” Hannibal said while blood was dripping from

the wound and onto his fingers. “Do you plan to fight another dragon?”

“No,” Will said and slowly shook his head. “At least not as literally as the last time.”

Hesitatingly, Will looked at the armatures of the boat. He licked his lips before he looked back.

“I don’t know what to do. I thought maybe talking to you would help.”

Hannibal just tilted his head slightly to the side to imply Will should continue.

“You said suicide is the enemy,” Will began while he desperately tried to sort out his thoughts before he spoke.

“Well, if you are dying right now, it’s not really suicide, is it?” Hannibal asked back with a half-smile. “It’s more a ticket to new chances to create the world you want.”

“I think… I think I don’t want to experience any new worlds.”

Hannibal frowned and sat up slightly. Blood dropped on the floor as he moved.

“What is your other choice?”

“End it? Move forward to the fall from the cliff and see what happens when I fall again.”

Hannibal’s expression was unreadable; he had put on his mask and Will couldn’t see what was behind it.

“You don’t know if you would survive it,” Hannibal said.

“No,” Will agreed. The thought was daunting. “I thought we would die when I pulled us over the cliff. You let me do it.”

“I did,” Hannibal said and looked at his wound. “Like you, I didn’t wish us to be separated again. If you could only be with me in death, I was willing to accept that. And the possibility of surviving the fall existed.”

“A slim chance,” Will said, more to himself than to Hannibal.

“The alternative was making you come with me and crushing you in the process. I couldn’t bear the thought. Instead I put myself into your hands.”

“And I killed us.”

Hannibal raised his shoulders a little and dropped them, a hint of a shrug.

“Do you remember dying?”

Will tried to remember, but he only recalled the fall, not the landing. He shook his head.

“In the beginning, when I arrived in the past, I thought it was possible that my reality was a dream I had while falling.”

“And you decided it was of no consequence,” Hannibal reminded him. “You wanted to try being with the younger version of me. Do you want to be with the version of me that’s currently waiting on top of the cliff, Will?”

He isn’t you, Will thought. *He hasn’t stewed in the BSHCI for years while I ran away. He hasn’t sent a killer after my wife in a jealous hissy fit.*

“He wouldn’t let me pull us over a cliff,” he said aloud. “And he never killed a dragon with me.”

He looked into his hallucinated Hannibal’s eyes and felt sad for the Hannibal on the cliff.

“If you cannot accept him as he is, you can either change him or, as you pointed out, move on. The latter, I assume, is what you would prefer.”

It was a relief that Hannibal said it. It meant Will didn’t have to.

“Yes,” he hurriedly said. “I want to… to go back to the fall and take my chance with that. I can’t continue working my way through possibilities that… don’t matter in the end.”

“What’s stopping you then?” Hannibal asked curiously. Will looked at the blood which had pooled around Hannibal.

“Me moving forwards means the Hannibal waiting on top of the cliff will die.”

“A minor matter.”

“Is it?” Will asked. The thought of hurting the other Hannibal was almost too painful for him to bear.

“You decided the worlds you create are not what you want. Therefore, they and their inhabitants can be of no consequence for you.”

“It’s not that simple for me,” he answered sighing. Hannibal smiled.

“But Will,” he said gently, “it can be.”

Will blinked and when he opened his eyes Hannibal was gone, even the blood on the floor was no more.

“It can be?” Will asked himself frantically. It took a moment longer, but then he understood. It could be if he were like Hannibal. He stood up and walked to the armatures. He placed his hands on them and let Hannibal’s calm and coolness sink over him. Hannibal wouldn’t

hesitate to sacrifice a Will that wasn't his. He hadn't hesitated when he started to saw open Will's head. Slowly, Will found himself relax as his muscles loosened and his breathing got deeper and calmer.

He looked down at the one piece of equipment he hadn't checked and started to test it. The radio, as with the rest of the boat, was fine. He dialed through the frequencies until her reached channel 16, the emergency number of the coast guard.

"I'm sorry," he whispered before he turned on the microphone.

"Mayday, Mayday, Mayday," he said. "This is Will Graham, I'm with the FBI. Mayday, this is Will Graham from the FBI. I'm being held hostage by the serial killer Hannibal Lecter and one accomplice, an Asian woman who goes by the name Chiyoh."

He went on to describe the location and layout of the house in quick procession and urged them to reach out to Jack Crawford from the FBI. He repeated the message two more times and when he ended the last call with "Over", he felt sick in his stomach.

Chapter End Notes

Season 3 Episode 13 "The Wrath of the Lamb" BACKWARD to

Pre-Season 1 Episode 1 FOWARD to
Season 1 Episode 11 "Rôti" BACKWARD to
Season 1 Episode 6 "Coquilles" FORWARD to

Season 1 Episode 13 "Savoureux" FORWARD to
Season 2 Episode 7 "Yakimono" FORWARD to
Season 2 Episode 13 "Mizumono" FORWARD to

Season 3 Episode 7 "Digestivo"

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

After the events of "We Killed a Dragon Last Night" Will found himself moving around in time. Tired from the time jumps and Will has run off with the Hannibal from after escaping from Muskrat farm. But he realized he wants to go back to his Hannibal from the cliff fall and started a plan to get one of them killed.

Chapter Notes

Blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc. Have fun, let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

I'm very grateful for my wonderful beta readers: emptyheart, NiaKantorka, Gwilbers and Cathy_Kitty_Pretty.
Thank you so much for all your help! All remaining errors are mine.

Please check out the wonderful gif Sirenja <3 made for the fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The walk back was hell. Hannibal's calm was wearing off and Will could feel himself crying. He hoped the salty sea water would mask his tears from this timeline's Hannibal. The hike up the cliff took a long time and he was out of breath when he reached the top. Hannibal helped him up the last few steps and they sat down beside each other while he caught his breath.

"The boat seems fine," he reported, desperately hoping Hannibal wouldn't register his internal turmoil. "I couldn't check the sails fully without getting it out of the cave, but everything else is in order. Drinking water is short, but you do have a small desalination plant so that shouldn't be a big problem."

"That is good to hear," Hannibal said smiling and tilted his head. "Do you like the boat?"

Don't be nice to me, Will begged silently. *I just betrayed you and, if I can manage, it will cost one or both of us their lives.*

"It's a good boat," he said aloud. "Could be a bit crowded if Chiyoh comes with us, though."

Hannibal stood up and Will followed suit.

“As nobody is likely to be looking for Chiyoh and there are no charges against her,” Hannibal said as they started back towards the house, “she will travel by other means.”

“That’s good,” Will said weakly and gripped Hannibal’s hand. It earned him a surprised smile, but Hannibal let him hold on while they walked back. Will wondered how much time they had. It would take a little while for his message to reach the FBI and for the FBI to confirm his story. But with Jack being back, everything would move quickly after that. A few hours maybe. *What should I do? What would Hannibal like to do?*, Will wondered.

“When is Chiyoh coming back?” Will asked.

“She shouldn’t be back for a few hours at least.”

“Can we maybe... cook together?”

“Of course,” Hannibal answered smiling. Will hadn’t ever seen him smile as honestly and often as he did now.

“Let’s do that then.”

Back at the house, Will excused himself. He changed out of his wet clothes and went to the bathroom. He checked the medicine cabinet and found aspirin. With shaking fingers, Will took some of them while he remembered his actions in the last timeline. The memory of a desperate Hannibal Lecter followed Will as he joined Hannibal in the kitchen.

Will tried to enjoy watching Hannibal cook, but the guilt and fear was making him tense. More than once Hannibal gave him a worried side glance. But he didn’t ask. Will kind of wished he would.
They made a roast which would take a while in the oven. It gave them time to prepare the potatoes and vegetables to serve with the meat. As he chopped the vegetables and Hannibal peeled the potatoes, Will felt himself calm down again. He needed to make this Hannibal happy until it ended. No matter how guilty he felt, he couldn’t spoil Hannibal’s last hours with him even if he was bringing death.

“Tell me what you want to do when we are gone?” he asked Hannibal.

“There are many places I would like to show you,” Hannibal said. “But I believe for the first few months we should lay low.”

“I know, I know,” Will said. “But tell me anyway. Tell me what we will do when the world has forgotten us, please.”

He listened to Hannibal’s smooth voice paint pictures of faraway places and smiled. It was a nice dream.

He thought he was fooling Hannibal, until they sat down and Hannibal said: “You seem stressed since we came back.”

Will sighed, hating that he had to lie again.

“I… I’ve realized the enormity of what I’m doing.”

Hannibal looked away for a moment and then to the plate on the table.

“Is it too much, Will? Do you wish to stay?”

Oh, Hannibal, Will thought sadly.

“No, I want to leave,” he answered truthfully and sadly. “But I hate that my leaving will hurt others.”

That I will hurt or kill you with my betrayal.

Hannibal kept frowning slightly and Will added truthfully: “I want to leave all this behind and be with you, but it’s hard. It’s selfish and cruel. My decision will hurt people.”

“And their pain is your pain,” Hannibal said, understanding and also misunderstanding.

“Yes,” Will replied and smiled sadly. He took Hannibal’s hand and brought it up to his lips, kissing the backside as he had on the patio before.

Hannibal kept hold of Will’s hand and pulled it to his lips to reciprocate the gesture. The kiss made Will feel hot and cold. He wondered if he should offer more sex, but Hannibal would probably be offended if they didn’t eat now and Will couldn’t trust himself to not betray his deception while aroused.

The food was good, exceptionally good, as with most food Hannibal served, but it left the taste of betrayal in his mouth. It reminded him of their last dinner in the original timeline before Hannibal had killed Abigail. He hadn’t been able to enjoy it then either.

When Hannibal went to take care of the dishes, Will stayed in the main room and stood in front of the windows. He stared in the direction where the dragon had watched them, from where Francis had shot Hannibal. Tactically, it was the best entrance point. With the sun still being up for a while, it would also be easy to see anyone coming to the house. Will purposefully looked away. Jack would come soon. If he wanted to die or have Hannibal die, he would need Hannibal to be distracted. Like he had distracted him the last time.

Will turned away from the window and went to the couch. Being here and waiting for an attack felt very repetitive. The slight annoyance he felt at being in the same situation again helped him stave off the guilt. He shouldn’t be here. It wasn’t his world and the Hannibal in the kitchen wasn’t his Hannibal. He repeated the thoughts again and again in his head to keep himself calm.

"Will?" Hannibal said, startling him from his thoughts. Hannibal was back in the room and was carrying a wine bottle and two glasses. Will’s throat tightened at the sight, but Hannibal’s

clothes were different from when the dragon attacked them and his hair was longer now. He wasn't Will's Hannibal and Will had only to lie to him for a little longer.

"Yes?"

"Have you decided yet?" Hannibal asked as he came closer and placed the glasses on the table.

"Decided?"

"What my fate will be."

Will blinked, not understanding, and watched Hannibal open the wine bottle.

"We are being watched right now. I'm assuming you called the FBI from the boat?"

Will froze. He hadn't thought Hannibal suspected him, but at the same time, he felt no surprise.

"Yes, I did. How do you know we are being watched?"

"They triggered some alarms," Hannibal said calmly as he filled the wine glasses.

"Chiyoh?" Will asked as he took the glass Hannibal held out for him. He felt relieved that Hannibal knew. His guilt vanished, but he was hyperaware of any move from Hannibal now.

"She has left," Hannibal said. "It seemed prudent to send her away. My decision to stay with you does not have to condemn Chiyoh too."

Will pressed his lips together and looked away from Hannibal's eyes. Nervously he sipped his wine. He wanted to say Hannibal wasn't doomed, but it would be a lie. Hannibal didn't deserve a lie.

"If I understand your silence correctly, I am to be arrested soon?" Hannibal mused and drank from his glass. He was still standing in front of Will, facing the windows. He was much too calm for someone facing arrest. But he had been calm at Wolf Trap too.

"I didn't plan to let them arrest you," Will said and placed his glass on the table.

Will didn't want this to end in an arrest. He wanted one of them dead. It was selfish, but he wanted to move on to the fall and his Hannibal.

"So, you still search for vengeance and wish to kill me."

The Will of this timeline might have wanted that. But Will wasn't looking for vengeance. He just wanted this to end. This wasn't his place or time.

"I'm sorry," he said to Hannibal. "But I want this to end; I think one of us has to die for that."

Hannibal sighed. Will heard it with surprise. He couldn't remember having heard Hannibal sigh before.

"You were ready to eat me in Florence," Will said.

"I believe I would have regretted killing you."

"But not eating me," Will squibbed. He felt time run out; if the FBI was surrounding them, he didn't have long. He hoped he could still manipulate the situation to get himself or Hannibal killed. Otherwise, this would be a loss.

"No, that I wouldn't have regretted," Hannibal confirmed and smiled. "But eating you is no longer an option, is it?"

"If the FBI is outside, like you said, the only way to take a bite out of me is… well, to take a bite out of me."

Will thought Hannibal was considering it, as he saw the side glance Hannibal gave him. The moment passed and Hannibal put his glass down. He slowly walked away. Will turned on the couch to watch him go to the middle of the room and kneel down, with his hands above his head. Will stood up and walked over to him. Hannibal didn't react to Will standing beside him. Will thought it might be easier to just kill Hannibal now and restart at an earlier point in time as to try to fix this. They were most likely being watched and Hannibal's surrender was very obvious. The FBI were most probably coming closer.

Will walked to the door to the patio and opened it. His instincts fought with his conviction and he needed to slowly inhale and exhale to calm himself down. His heart continued to race in his chest. Will licked his lips and spoke.

"I said one of us has to die, not that it has to be you, Hannibal."

He didn't wait for a reaction. Will stepped through the door and walked quickly toward the cliff. He heard Hannibal shout his name and he heard him move, following him much faster than Will was moving. Shots sounded through the air. Will stopped at the familiar sound of bullets penetrating a body. Hannibal groaned in pain behind him and collapsed from the sound of it. Will was torn between going to him and just waiting.

"Will…?" he heard Hannibal gargle out weakly.

He didn't think, he ran to Hannibal and went down beside him. He was lying on the side, bleeding from the numerous shots as Will turned him on his back. Blood painted his hands red. Seeing Hannibal dying was as horrible as the last time. Their eyes met.

"Hannibal," Will whispered. From afar he heard someone shout his name, it sounded like Jack.

"It's better this way," Will promised and stroked Hannibal's hair. "You are not meant to be

caged.”

Will didn’t look away while Hannibal bled out, his bloody breaths becoming shallower and shallower until they stopped.

I did this, he thought and wondered if the other Will would remember and if he would decide to jump off the cliff on his own when he was gone from this body.

~ONE~

Will woke up in the dark and in pain. He was on his back; the moon was shining over him. He blinked and realized a knife was in his cheek, cutting his tongue. With a shaking hand, Will reached up to pull out the knife, but the dragon was on him. Muscled arms and strong hands gripped Will on his arm, pulling him up and then around his neck. Will felt a sharp pain as his neck was snapped.

~TWO~

Falling.

Crashing in ice cold water feet first and pain.

Hannibal was dead weight and later Will wouldn’t remember how he managed to drag them to the rocks. He was aware again when he laid on the rocks. He didn’t feel cold and knew that was a bad sign. Hannibal was still beside him. The waves were loud and filled his mind.

Pain woke him. Two people were carrying him. His limbs dragged over rocks and his injuries hurt. Will opened his eyes. It was still dark.

“Hannibal?” he asked weakly. His voice was distorted from the wound.

“He is alive,” a woman said.

Chiyoh, Will thought and relaxed slightly.

He was dropped and he screamed in pain. He was shaking when he opened his eyes. He saw a wooden floor.

The boat, Will thought.

“Are you awake?” Chiyoh asked.

Will groaned, unable to speak.

Someone, a man, moved him onto his back. It wasn’t Hannibal, but an elderly man with sharp cheekbones and grey hair. He looked distressed.

“They both need a doctor,” the man said looking away from Will. He had a faint French sounding accent.

“Hannibal,” Will said barely comprehensible. Hannibal was a doctor.

“He is unconscious,” Chiyoh answered from out of his line of sight. “We need to bring him down the cabin.”

They moved him with difficulty. Will tried to relax as much as he could considering the pain, to make it easier for them. They lifted him onto the bed, beside another body.

Hannibal, Will realized and reached out for him with a shaking hand. Hannibal was cold. Will froze in fear until he saw him breathe shallowly.

“We need to move,” Chiyoh said. “Can you look after them?”

“Yes, yes,” the man said. “I can take care of them, but we need a doctor.”

“I will try to find one,” she said and left.

The man started to cut off their clothes. Normally Will would have freaked out about a stranger with a knife close to him, but he was too tired at the moment. He looked at Hannibal again and blacked out.

Pain woke him as something was pressed against his shoulder. Will tried to fight it off, but he was too weak.

“Please don’t fight me,” the man said. “I’m bandaging your shoulder so you don’t bleed out.”

After a long period of pain, the man sighed.

“I need to move you off the bed to fix the bandage and put one on Hannibal.”

Moving off the bed seemed impossible, but Will tried to nod. The man was trying to help. He lost consciousness during the move.

Later he woke up again. He was on the floor, but he was lying on some blankets and a few were covering him. Bandages were around his face and stabbed shoulder. He wanted to move to see Hannibal, but his body wouldn’t move as he wanted it to and his mouth was full of

bloody gunk. He turned his head to the side and tried to spit it out. When he couldn't, he started sobbing silently. The movements caused so much pain that he blacked out again.

The next time he woke up the pain had lessened and he felt a little fuzzy, probably from painkillers. He was warm and could feel stitches in his tongue. He opened his eyes and found himself in a room that reminded him of a high-class hotel. There was a bright window, but Will couldn't see through the curtains. When Will turned to look at the opposite side of the room, he saw Hannibal in the other bed. It wasn't a hospital bed, but like Will, he was on an IV and a half full catheter bag was taped to the bed frame. Will's thoughts went to his own dick and yes, there was a catheter in him too. Exhausted, Will waited for a while, but nobody came and he fell asleep again.

He must have gotten a fever, because his next waking moments were a jumbled mess. The worried faces of Chiyoh and the stranger hovered over him. He dreamt of dying or having Hannibal's death on his hands; worlds and worlds destroyed.

Clarity returned in little steps.

Waking up, he found a very tired looking Hannibal sitting beside his bed. He reached for him and fell asleep with the comforting dry warmth of Hannibal's hand in his.

His upper body was being lifted and a straw was put in his mouth. The water was wonderful, but swallowing was agony. He choked and started coughing until he was so exhausted he fell asleep.

"Hannibal?" he asked, barely audible when the stranger exchanged the bags on his IV. It still hurt to speak. The man looked at Will and sat down on the bed.

"He is doing exercises," he said. "He will be back soon. How do you feel?"

Will tried to smack his lips, but they were too dry. Realizing this, the man helped him sit up slightly and held a water cup with a straw to his mouth. Remembering his coughing fit, Will drank slowly. Swallowing wasn't easy. When the pain faded, Will realized how horrible his mouth tasted. The stranger took the cup away and patted Will's hand.

"It's good that you are awake," he told Will. "Hannibal was worried."

Will wanted to ask many things, but he was tired already and knew he wouldn't stay awake long. Frowning, he pointed at the man. He looked confusedly back at Will until he understood. He laughed for a second.

"My name is Robert. I'm Hannibal's uncle," he answered. Surprise at this news kept Will

awake a little longer until exhaustion pulled him down to sleep.

Arguing voices woke Will. He turned his head towards the voices. Hannibal was in a wheelchair beside his bed and the man, Robert, his uncle, was beside him. They were speaking in French. Will absent-mindedly wondered why they weren't speaking Lithuanian.

Hannibal said something that sounded like begging and Robert sighed and left. Hannibal looked at Will and their eyes met. Surprise made Hannibal's eyes widen for a moment.

"Will," he said and smiled. He looked sad. It was an unusual look on Hannibal. Will tried to speak, but Hannibal shook his head.

"Don't speak," he told him. "The wound on your tongue got infected. You fought it off, but it was very close for a while. You should rest your tongue for as long as you can."

Will blinked to show he had understood and looked pointedly at the wheelchair.

"My back has been damaged. There is a high chance my ability to walk will return with time and rest."

Weakly, Will reached out with his hand and Hannibal took it. Will thought he should feel guilty, but the decision to pull them over the cliff had been made such a long time ago. He was just happy they had survived. The realization shook him. They had survived and he was now after the fall. Traveling in the past was over, he hoped. Now there was a chance to be with his Hannibal. Silently and in pain, Will started to cry.

"What's wrong?" Hannibal asked, leaning forward in the wheelchair and squeezing Will's hand.

Will squeezed back and tried to speak; sounds escaped him, that didn't make any words. Frustrated and in pain, Will closed his eyes. The emotional turmoil had tired him. He could feel himself begin to drift off. It was frustrating. He wanted to speak to Hannibal now that he had him back. And he needed to think about what had happened and how he would continue. But his body gave out on him. Right before he stopped being aware, he heard Hannibal speak.

"My Will," he said gently and kissed Will's hand. "I'm glad to see you again."

It took three more phases of being awake before Will could ask Hannibal what he had meant by that.

Once, Chiyoh was there when he woke up. Silently she helped him drink and urged him to sleep more. The next time Robert was with him and he smiled while he helped Will drink. Now that Will knew that the man was related to Hannibal, he saw similarities. But Robert was extremely cordial in comparison to Hannibal. Will would have liked to ask him how he dealt with what Hannibal was, but he was still easily tired and couldn't speak properly. His

tongue was healing and the swelling had decreased, but he was still unable to form understandable words.

The next time he woke up, a notepad and a pen were lying by his right hand and Hannibal was sleeping in the other bed; the wheelchair stood between them. It felt unreal to be back, or better to have moved forward and not be waking up in the past. Maybe part of that feeling came from the painkillers he was obviously on. Carefully he reached up to his face and touched the wound dressing. He could feel the little stitches through the gauze. He was really here.

Will wondered what would happen now and how it would be to be with Hannibal. And he wondered how much he himself had changed. The stress of the time jumps and the insights they had brought had worn him down. There was a possibility that his current tiredness came not only from the wound, but also from his emotional exhaustion. He studied Hannibal in the other bed. He seemed tired too and not being able to walk must be frustrating for him.

Hannibal would know Will had changed, he thought. He wouldn't be able to hide his changes from Hannibal and he didn't want to. Will wanted to share his experiences with him. He wanted to build up on the insights he had gained. There was a chance Hannibal would think he was crazy, but Will hoped the knowledge he had now would help him make Hannibal believe him.

With much effort, Will moved himself into a halfway sitting position. He rested a while afterwards, tired from it. The urge to communicate helped him stay awake and write. First, he wrote his questions on the top page. Having finished this, he struggled to write a short explanation of his experiences. He probably wouldn't start with this topic until he could speak, but just in case, he wanted to have it ready. Starting to write it took him a while, but in the end, he managed a few sentences.

"Hannibal, during the fall, something happened to me. I know this will be hard to grasp or believe.
I thought I had died and had woken up in the past; in a time in which we were strangers. I tried to live there and to be with you, but it resulted in my death. Again, I didn't really die but woke up…"

Hannibal moved and Will put the paper away and looked over. He was awake and watching Will.
Will waved. Hannibal smiled and sat up. His movements were stiff and he was dragging his whole body with the strength of his arms. With his gunshot wound all movements had to hurt. Frowning and worried, Will watched Hannibal sit up in bed and pull his legs over the edge. He pulled the wheelchair over and maneuvered himself into it with great effort. Will didn't like to watch and he wanted to help. He was also surprised Hannibal was showing him so much of his vulnerability.

"Hello," Hannibal greeted when he had rolled over to Will. He smiled, but he wasn't as carefree as when they left after the dragon broke them free. "Would you like to drink some water?"

Will nodded and watched Hannibal roll to the bedside table, fill a cup for Will and carefully bring it to him. He took it and it was incredibly heavy even though it was just half full. The water was clear and his mouth seemed to soak half of it straight in. Swallowing still hurt. Hannibal took the empty cup from him as Will finished. His movements were slow. Will pointed at the place where the dragon's bullet had penetrated him.

"The wound is healing well," Hannibal answered his unspoken question.

Will took his sheet of questions and circled "Should you really move with your injuries?" before he gave the page to Hannibal. He took it and read over all the questions before he answered Will.

"I should not overdo it," Hannibal said. "But some movement and exercise is recommended.

Take it slow, please, Will thought and reached out for Hannibal's hand. When they took hold of each other's, Will felt himself relax.

"As of your other questions," Hannibal continued and studied the page. "We are safe for the moment. It's an apartment my family owns, but as it wasn't found when I was arrested, I don't believe it will be found now."

Will nodded satisfied with the answer and squeezed Hannibal's hand briefly.

"Your shoulder wound is healing well, you need to start physical therapy soon," Hannibal said and frowned at Will's shoulder. He was avoiding Will's eyes as he spoke. It was unusual for him. "It's not the first time your shoulder got hurt. We have to be diligent with the exercises to ensure your flexibility."

Will took the notepad, turned the page and wrote on it before holding it up for Hannibal to read.

Something is wrong?

Hannibal read it and looked away. It made Will even more nervous. He wanted to reach out and hold him tight, to make sure he didn't slip away. Will didn't think he could survive losing Hannibal again.

"Hannibal," Will tried to say and Hannibal turned and shook his head.

"Don't, Will," Hannibal said. "Don't hurt yourself, please."

Will tried to urge him with his mind to speak about whatever it was. He had tried to kill them after all, maybe Hannibal had had enough.

"Nothing is *wrong*," Hannibal said and stroked Will's hand with his index finger. "Something has changed. I wanted to speak with you after you had recovered more and you could speak."

Shaking his head, Will gestured for him to continue.

“Very well,” Hannibal said and sighed. He looked up into Will’s eyes.

“Will, during the fall, something happened to me.”

Chapter End Notes

Season 3 Episode 13 “The Wrath of the Lamb” BACKWARD to

Pre-Season 1 Episode 1 FOWARD to
Season 1 Episode 11 "Rôti" BACKWARD to
Season 1 Episode 6 "Coquilles" FORWARD to

Season 1 Episode 13 "Savoureux" FORWARD to
Season 2 Episode 7 "Yakimono" FORWARD to
Season 2 Episode 13 “Mizumono” FORWARD to

Season 3 Episode 7 “Digestivo” FORWARD to
Season 3 Episode 13 “The Wrath of the Lamb” FORWARD to
After-Season 3 Episode 13 “The Wrath of the Lamb”

There we are, full circle. Thank you for reading it. Another “Three” coming in the next part.

Remember that the series is under blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc.
If you want to play in my sandbox, go for it. Just let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

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Some of our stars will always be the same by JonathansNightFlight

[Podfic] Sounders of Three by Rhast

Wake Me Up by soulsasylum

[COVER] Sounders of Three by TFE

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